

MEMORY OF THE PERIPHERIES:
NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF HISTORY IN CONTEMPORARY
SPANISH, BASQUE, CATALAN, AND GALICIAN NOVELS

by

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INTRODUCTION

i. On Peripheral Memory

The impetus for this study comes in great part from my conclusion that discussions in the press and academic criticism on the recuperation of historical memory in Spain have failed to take into account a considerable part of the country's population. Many have argued that decades into a democracy, the time has arrived to talk about and to study Civil War massacres and subsequent decades of human rights abuses, maintaining that the ethical duty to listen to silenced voices requires greater attention to the past. And yet, despite these arguments' focus on those previously excluded from critical discourse, they have acknowledged hardly, if at all, the voices of the periphery.

These discussions usually cast Spain as a single nation, even if split along a left-right ideological fault line both during the Civil War and in the present. Spain, the argument goes, must cure the wounds of the past by airing them and allowing them to heal. Spanish society, by overcoming the resistance of Francoist recalcitrance, could act in unison, as a "nosotros." For example, José Colmeiro writes, "En aquellos tiempos del tardofranquismo, sin saberlo estábamos recuperando o reconstruyendo lo que nos pertenecía aún sin tenerlo" (*Memoria histórica* 8).¹ It has often been theorized that memory of a perceived common past, among other factors, constitutes group identity. Observations of how collective memory acts or ought to act furthermore either define or

¹ This is not to negatively single out José Colmeiro, who has shown insightful interest in peripheral studies. For example, in his article "Peripheral Visions, Global Positions: Remapping Galician Culture," he seeks to rethink Galician studies in the context of postnational and interdisciplinary cultural studies.

presuppose what the remembering collectivity is. In the Spanish context, the collectivity is most frequently ciphered as a single entity.

However, these images of coherence are contradicted, or at least nuanced, by dissenting voices. Where do those who do not feel themselves to be part of the Spanish nation fit into the imagined monolith? Or those who conceive of themselves as part of a Spanish nation of nations, individuals with allegiance to one or more other cultures? Since political theorists and historians see self-conception as one of the primary defining factors of nation status, one need not be a peripheral nationalist to acknowledge the existence of other nations within the borders of Spain. Yet, too often the question of the existence of other cultural memories in Spain is shunted aside.

The backrounding of peripheral memory corresponds to the relatively lesser attention paid in academic circles to those cultures that produce it. It must be noted that some scholars in Spain and abroad are in fact developing inclusive, comparative approaches to the literatures of the Iberian Peninsula. Such efforts are bringing to the fore peripheral literatures and rejecting the strictures that adherence to national or linguistic categories imposes. The volume *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula* (Cabo Aseguinolaza, Abuín González, and Domínguez), to cite one example, incorporates several studies on literatures past and contemporary in non-Castilian tongues. Perhaps most importantly, a significant number of its authors consider literary production in multi-lingual contexts, from medieval Iberia to modern Bilbao.

Still, the extent that the other cultures of Spain have successfully entered into the mainstream cultural consciousness, beyond the political debate over the nation's shape as an "estado de autonomías," remains subject to debate. Some critics have argued that

writing and other language-dependent production in non-Castilian tongues often remains sealed within its cultural-linguistic community of origin. Basque critic Mari Jose Olaziregi argues for example that “only one Basque author ([Bernardo] Atxaga), a couple of Galician authors ([Manuel] Rivas, Suso de Toro) and a few Catalan writers ([Jesús] Moncada, [Quim] Monzó, [Carme] Riera) can be mentioned in the context of guaranteeing a hypothetical Spanish literary plurality” (“Canonical and non-canonical narrative” 326). Olaziregi further argues that “the institutional elements linked to literature (University, literary prizes, political presence, relationship to the media)” fail to respond to Spain’s reality (326).

More recently, however, a number of scholars have undertaken studies of what is typically called fiction of historical memory written by peripheral authors. Manuel Rivas, who writes in Galician, tops the list of authors garnishing critical attention. Often, however, writers such as Rivas or Atxaga are mentioned as side notes in studies by Hispanist critics on Castilian-language writers like Eduardo Mendoza or Almudena Grandes. The purpose of this dissertation is to continue to fill this gap.

I work with the premise that other nations, and thus other memories, exist in Spain. The premise is hardly a radical one. The nature and definition of “nation” is a much debated question, in academic as well as political contexts. The scholar of nationalism Anthony Smith elucidates the term by drawing attention to the idea of a pre-existing sense of common identity. He proposes that the nation is “a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or ‘homelands,’ create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized

laws” (30). The definition fits the cases of the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia, despite their internal dissention.

A number of critics, such as Joan Ramon Resina and Ulrich Winter, have informed my research by theorizing the coexistence of national memories in Spain. Winter for example, explains the relevance of Spain’s pluri-cultural character for the possible study of Spanish “*lieux de mémoire*,” Pierre Nora’s oft-cited concept of places, physical or symbolic, in which national memories are represented. In comparison to the French equivalents, he writes, Spanish places of memory must overcome the divisions between “*diversas memorias colectivas*” – those of the “*dos Españas*” and those of the “*múltiples naciones e identidades culturales*” (23).

In examining Spanish novels of memory, I have asked how, if at all, they take into account what Winter calls its “*pluralidad histórica*.” As Stewart King aptly puts it, “It has been argued that the Civil War was not only a conflict between two social classes; it was also a struggle over different notions of Spain and Spanishness, as Franco sought to eradicate or marginalize those cultural practices which did not conform to his understanding of a single national identity based on ‘*una sola lengua, el castellano, y una sola personalidad, la española*’” (256). The alleged perfection of the transition to democracy, similarly, is often questioned on the basis of whether Spain’s politicians did enough to dismantle Francoist institutions and acted justly in granting amnesty to participants in an oppressive regime. For peripheral intellectuals, however, the transition failed also to properly settle the status of their nations. Many, for example Salvador Cardús, have argued that the “*café para todos*” model, in which all regions were granted autonomous status regardless of their cultural-historical characteristics, sidestepped the

demands of peripheral nationalism. For Cardús, the integration of the nationalities “was perhaps the most poorly resolved” of “all the changes effected by the Transition,” which was a process that failed “to incorporate a pluricultural memory” (26).

Do Spanish authors, in creating their novelistic “lugares de memoria,” incorporate peripheral memory? I argue, in the first two chapter of this study, that they do not. The question – my central research question – then becomes: how is peripheral memory different from a “central” Spanish one? And how is literature of memory of the peripheries different from centralist literature? An overview of the study will indicate how I have attempted to answer these questions.

In chapter 1, I examine the debate on memory in Spanish culture and literature with special attention to academic writing on the topic. This has required an overview of literature on the war, journalism of the last two decades, political discourse, activists’ websites and rallies, novels, and academic books and essays. I have attempted to expose some of the commonplaces of writing about memory in Spain that helped spur me to undertake this study, taking the opportunity to revisit their validity. These include the frequent use of the rhetorical figure of Spain as a body whose health is endangered by a lack of memory. Such figurations not only reify collective psychology but also tend to assume and promote the kind of unitary vision of Spain that my dissertation critiques.

Furthermore, the demand to create healing memory, which often appears in critical studies of historical fiction, can lead critics to disregard the complexity of literature. My aim in this chapter, and throughout the study, is not only to make space for a discussion of peripheral culture. I wish also to bring to light the exceedingly complex ways in which many fiction authors explore how the past informs the present. Merely

affirming the need to redress past injustices does not address the strategies through which writers – both in Castilian and in peripheral tongues – craft nuanced, sometimes contradictory, understanding of the possibility and desirability of preserving and recovering the past, and how the past weighs on contemporary national identity. I examine, for example, Cercas’s poetics of ambivalence (in chapter 1), Anjel Lertxundi’s self-critical reflection (chapter 4), and Suso de Toro’s narration of horrors from which we must avert our eyes and yet must confront (chapter 5). Seeking an adequate approach to consider these strategies, I build on David Hertzberger’s analysis; exposing novels’ engagement with ideologies, he contends that Spanish historical novels have written “against the grain” of Francoism.

In chapter 2 I analyze novels by three well-known Spanish authors, Benjamín Prado, Javier Cercas, and José María Merino, who write in Castilian. I focus on the structural devices that these metafictional novels use in recovering the past for narration in the present. A close reading of these forms sheds light on the novels’ understanding of how the Francoist past continues to affect Spain and how Spaniards may make sense of this past. The three novels, I find, do not constitute “lugares de memoria españoles” that account for “diversas memorias” (Winter), for they largely ignore the existence of alternative national memories.

In contrast, peripheral novels of historical memory address different histories. Because an understanding of the particular must build upon an in-depth consciousness of local conditions, in chapter 3 I discuss the history and cultural memory of one of the peripheral nations – the Basque Country – as pertains to the Civil War and its legacy. A closer look reveals not just that the war followed an atypical path in the Basque Country,

but also that memories of the conflict focus on a particular set of questions, different from those of the novels of the center discussed in chapter 2. To a large degree the discussion of memory and of the war and aftermath in Basque cultural production, as much as on the clash between left and right and democracy and dictatorship, centers on its impact on Basque autonomy and on the expression of local cultural identity. Inescapable in such discussion is the separatist violence often thought to have stemmed indirectly from the Civil War, violence that has generated a trauma more recent and raw than that of the war. Additionally, as I discuss in the chapter, thanks to the impression, accurate or not, that Basque culture is rooted in pre-historic times, its relationship with the past builds upon its own particular perception of chronology. In order to ground my reading of Basque literature, I discuss the myths and storylines used to explain a Basque past.

Chapter 4 shows how works by three novelists who use Euskera – Koldo Izaguirre, Kirmen Uribe, and Anjel Lertxundi – address such myths and narratives of the past. A common point in these novels is their introspective questioning of such myths, their call to self-critically examine certain aspects of Basque culture. The novels narrate a past thought to be constitutive of Basque culture in a language that arguably is its most important symbol. Moreover, Izaguirre and Lertxundi have been at the forefront of efforts to construct what is in some sense a new literature. And yet, their works investigate rather than merely affirm or celebrate Basqueness.

In the final chapter of this dissertation I ask if certain qualities may be thought to categorize peripheral literature of memory. I find common features in three novels that recall from a present tense perspective the Civil War and the Francoist legacy: Bernardo Atxaga's *Soinujolearen semea*, Jaume Cabré's *Les veus del Pamano*, and Suso de Toro's

Home sen nome. I argue that all use narrative structures that elude the centralized authority of a single voice. More specifically, they feature narrators of double identity, figures I see as representing the experience of the encounter between cultures in the third space of the peripheral, stateless nation.

I offer the use of double narrators as characteristic of peripheral literature with some trepidation, for the device appears only in certain works. More than literary historiography that attempts to identify common characteristics, I have sought to compare and contrast how authors react to a similar set of circumstances. These include the use of marginalized tongues and participation in a literature of high symbolic value to the communities in which they write. Authors who write about a past in the peripheries respond to a shared tension. They wield a language and a past that are building blocks of cultures in need of affirmation while writing in postmodern genres that cast suspicion on the possibility of recovering the past and on all “grand narratives” of truth. The use of the double narrator is one such response to this tension among many heterogeneous strategies.

ii. Definitions and Key Terms: On Memory

Before proceeding, I must explain my use of a number of key terms that occur frequently in this study and my debt to the critics who have defined them. Already I have spoken of historical novels, memory novels, and historical memory, and now pause to define these terms.

I draw a first distinction between historical novels and novels of memory, following Jo Labanyi’s useful, and often cited taxonomy of fiction about the past

(“Memory and Modernity”). I use the term historical fiction in the broad sense of fiction about the past and, more narrowly, as fiction narrated in the past-tense perspective of the temporal plane in which it is set. Historical fiction “narrates a sealed-off past, attempting to recount the ‘facts’ with maximum verisimilitude” (Labanyi “Memory and Modernity” 93). I use fiction of memory exclusively in the more narrow sense of literature in which recollection of the past is incorporated into the representational world of the work itself. That is to say, usually two or more temporal planes coexist – one in a present tense, and others in the past that haunt (as Labanyi describes) the present – and are recovered through investigation or other mechanisms.

Taxonomy of memory types is complicated by the fact that scholars use the terms “historical memory” and “collective memory” in many different senses. The concept of “collective memory” as used in contemporary scholarship has its origins in the writing of Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), and I understand it in his sense. Collective memory is the version of the past as understood by any group, reinforced through group interaction, often adapted to suit group needs. I follow Todorov’s caution to avoid reifying the remembering community. As Todorov puts it in his discussion of the concept of “collective memory”:

[T]he term is very dubious. . . . Memory, in the sense of mental traces, only ever belongs to an individual; collective memory is not memory at all, but a variety of discourse used in the public arena. It serves to reflect the image that a society, or one of its constituent groups, wishes to give itself. (132)

For Halbwachs there are as many memories as there are groups, be they the members of classroom, a family, a generation, a professional trade, or others. Halbwachs draws, as in the name of one of his chapter headings, “The Ultimate Opposition between Collective

Memory and History” (79). Many literary critics continue to follow Halbwachs’s distinction between memory – as that which is relevant to a group and preserved through various mechanisms – and history, that which is set into writing because it is lost or being lost from “living” memory. In my view this radical demarcation cannot be sustained, since historiography is influenced by group needs and since, in modern literate societies, writing about the past influences “lived” memory of the past.

I apply the term historical memory as it is used most frequently in popular, political press, and some critical formulations. In Spain, the expression means a heightened awareness of the past and implies a willingness to bring to light past injustices and redress them. Historical memory in the Spanish context may be considered, as José Colmeiro does, a form of collective memory fortified by “una reflexión crítica” of what is remembered, memory sustained with “una conciencia de su propia necesidad como testimonio histórico” (*Memoria histórica* 18).

To delimit my object of textual analysis, rather than speaking of collective memory in general, I have adopted Jan Assman’s distinction between memory types. Building on Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg’s theories of collective memory, Assman defines three categories. These include science-based memory (history) and two socially derived types: a communicative or everyday memory and cultural memory. Assman defines communicative memory as that which is based on everyday exchanges such as the relaying of anecdotes. It can store events as far back as eighty to one hundred years (126-7). Cultural memory, on the other hand, covers a fixed, rather than shifting time period. A category absent from Halbwachs’s memory/history binary, according to

Assman, cultural memory is transmitted in “objectivized culture,” that is, texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, and even landscapes (128).

For reasons of scope and methodology, I have limited myself to the more readily accessible, and delimited, category of cultural memory (including fictional writing). A description of a group’s oral memory would require exhaustive sociological or oral historiographical research. Assman’s cultural memory retains communicative memory in readable, durable formats, be they textual, visual, or performative (as in the cases of rituals or traditions). Assman convincingly argues that “in the context of objectivized culture and of organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory” (128). In other words, the conversion of oral memory into writing does not, against Halbwachs’s implication, necessarily entail entering the realm of scientific history since written cultural memory transmits cultural norms and socially developed interpretations of the past. I might add that historiography, though distinguished from other forms of cultural production by its requirement of attempted objectivity, can also participate in what Assman calls the “concretion of identity,” that is, the creation of knowledge on which the “group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity . . . and derives formative and normative impulses” (128).

In my analysis, I weigh literary approaches to the past against other forms of cultural memory that may be examined through textual analysis. I do so with the caveat that examples of cultural memory do not exemplify simply the communicative memory of a collectivity, but rather an individual’s interpretation of the past, even if one molded by group pressures. For, as Gedi and Elam correctly point out in their critique of

Halbwachs's writing, social memory does not function as "an arena of contest between rival notions" in which "the better notion should win and lead the field" (39). Rather, as they point out, "In reality often enough, certain individuals, or a group of individuals, powerful and presumptuous enough, take over and assign themselves as the spokesmen of this so-called 'society'. . . . [W]e are dealing with concrete individuals who either speak for themselves or claim to speak in the name of 'society'" (39).

iii. Definitions: On the Peripheral Literatures

Another key question for this study is what qualifies as peripheral literature. I adopt the term periphery, following convention on the topic, and for want of a better term, to describe the Spanish territories with an autonomous administration, a significant use of a non-Castilian language, a nationalist movement with origins in the pre-Civil War era, and a frequent consciousness or assertion of "difference" or non-Spanishness. The territories that share this confluence of factors are the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia. The term "periphery" could certainly apply to other geographically distant or linguistically differentiated territories, such as the Canary Islands, or the rural pockets in which Bable, Aragonese, or Occitan are spoken. However, because my study focuses on memory and nation, I address those territories that may be associated with a national scale and history of national consciousness.

By peripheral literatures I mean those originating in the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia by authors participating in a differentiated culture. Needless to say, there are many other ways in which a literature or work may be considered peripheral either because of its form, reception, distribution, or connection to marginalized groups,

but these considerations must remain outside the scope of the current project. Conversely, many works by Basque, Catalan, or Galician authors could be considered mainstream according to certain criteria. There are many examples of novels that adopt best-seller forms and do not critique the literature of the center or mainstream ideology. Aingeru Epaltza's crime-genre novel *Rock'n'roll*, for example, is written in Basque, but without any apparent subversiveness beyond a light anti-establishmentarianism.

I do not purport to offer definitive criteria to determine which works belong to the literatures of the Basque Country, Catalonia, or Galicia and which do not. Perhaps any definition would only serve to negate the complex realities of literary systems, which include structures that both open and close them to others. To a great extent, the peripheral literary systems, to use Itamar Even-Zohar's term, are organized by language. To take the example of the Basque literary system, which I have studied most in depth, publishing house profits depend on sales to a small group of Euskera readers as well as on certain government protections and vehicles of promotion like the Basque language media. Basque-language fiction publication is dominated by a few publishing houses (such as Pamiela, Alberdania, Erein, Elkar, Susa) which publish works in Castilian Spanish as well, revealing the porous boundaries between literary systems. A number of Basque authors, including Atxaga, either self-translate their work into Castilian or are directly involved in the process. Furthermore, as Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini summarize, in contrast to Catalan literature, with a well-established publishing industry and relatively large reading audience, Galician and Basque literatures face challenges in trying to forge a wide readership for books published in those

languages (xiii-xiv). The result is that more readers are likely to read Atxaga translated into Castilian than in the original Basque.

Brad Epps has pointed out how factors such as a pluricultural concept of Spain and the transatlantic migration of Spanish and Latin American writers, who share a single language, have rendered difficult national categorization. He asks, “Is the place of birth more, or less, important than the place of production? Does language determine national pertinence? Is Spanish literature written in Spain, in Spanish, by native-born Spaniards, or is it something else?” (721). Similar, perhaps unanswerable, questions extend to peripheral literatures.

As a rule, manuals of peripheral literary history have understood the term to mean literature written in the vernacular tongue. The admired Basque linguist Koldo Mitxelena, for example, titles his monograph “Historia de la literatura vasca” but makes clear that his subject is “La literatura en lengua vasca,” which is the title of the first section (11). His criteria remain intact in subsequent manuals like Jon Juaristi’s or Patri Urkizu’s.

The logic of Mitxelena’s definition has been discussed elsewhere, and a full discussion of its implications exceeds the scope of this study.² It may be argued that the definition appears to offer in language an objective categorization, one that does not depend on the subjective categories of ethnic, national or cultural belonging. On the other hand, the terms Basque literature, Catalan literature, or Galician literature inevitably suggest the identitary dimension that demonyms imply. Perhaps in part because of the associations, monographs like Mitxelena’s often include some discussion on authors writing entirely or mostly in Spanish. For example, Mitxelena mentions, though without

2 María Bueno Martínez’s article provides a good introduction on how the parameters of Basque literature are defined, documenting the debate over the topic in the press and in criticism.

an extended analysis, the works of Navarro Villoslada and Arturo Campión, traditionalist writers who participated in an invention, in the Romantic vein, of a Basque legendary past at the turn of the nineteenth-to-twentieth century (136-7). Their inclusion seems inevitable also given the diglossic reality of the Basque Country, of the group of writers producing so-called “foralist” literature, and (as is true today), of texts addressing Basque culture. Furthermore, in the present-day Basque Country, where only approximately one in four residents speaks Basque well, reserving the term Basque literature for that written in Euskera would not only appear unjust, as María Bueno argues, but also contrary to fact, in denial of a multilingual, heterogenous, global, and mobile society.

The inclusion of a section on “Basque people’s other literatures” by Estibalitz Ezkerra on basqueliterature.com, an online literary manual with web links and news updates featuring contributions by most of the better-known academic critics, is in my view a welcome one. The format of the inclusion is less than satisfactory however. On the one hand Ezkerra proposes adopting “un espíritu de justicia” informed by post-colonial criticism to address the reality of the Basque Country, recognizing that “en cuestiones de vasquidad/identidad, no hay monopolio.” On the other hand, the Spanish, French, and handful of English-language authors are segregated out as an “other-than” category from the rest of the Web site. I make this observation aware that finding a more satisfactory solution is no simple task.

Because of the privileged role that language plays in the forging of a differentiated identity, it may be seized upon for essentialist and exclusionary literary categorization. Criticism of writers with significant bodies of work in two languages, such as Eugeni d’Ors and Rosalía del Castro, which has in some instances focused

exclusively on one or the other language, following nationalistic rather than artistic criteria, provide an example. Helena Miguélez Carballeira, following the critic Mario Santana, has described “the linguistic criterion on which national literary histories have been founded as a disservice to the rather more polyvalent cultures they aim to represent,” citing as an example the exclusion of Galician-language Castro poetry from Spanish literary history (273).

Transoceanic or transnational studies have established that literature in fact functions along criteria other than those of the national-linguistic paradigm. Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini correctly point out that “some authors . . . insist on going beyond . . . localist identification as they see themselves working within a plural Spain that is also part of larger communities: the European Union, the World Republic of Letters, and so on” (xi). One need only glance at certain authors’ reflections on their own work to glean that they do not seal off their writing from dialogue with literature of the rest of the world. For example, Lertxundi, in *Vida y otras dudas*, an essay to a great extent constructed as an intertext, cites international authors such as Italo Calvino, Alberto Manguel, and Czeslaw Milosz as often as he does Basque ones like Harkaitz Cano.

My use of the terms Basque, Catalan, and Galician literature is informed by these considerations. Though I do not propose the linguistic criterion, for the reasons just cited, the sections of this dissertation addressing peripheral literature do focus mostly on works written in the minority co-official tongues because the symbolic resonance of writing in the non-Castilian language is a central question in my inquiry. I thus address how authors wield their language as a tool of identitary construction, often to profoundly question the

ends of such gestures. However, I include also authors who write in Spanish but address, with what may be called an “insider’s” sympathy, questions of Basque identity in memory. I am thinking especially of Ramiro Pinilla, the 1960 Nadal prize winner from Getxo who applies with irony and subtlety the symbolic resources used in expressing identity, such as rural imagery and myths of antiquity.

Finally, I must address the linguistic versions of the texts I have used. Since I cannot read Basque, I have relied entirely on Castilian translations. For the sake of consistency with Galician and Catalan literary works, I have used where available translations into Castilian as well. For critical works with no translation, I have cited the originals, which I believe are easily comprehensible to Spanish speakers. I have bracketed as beyond the scope of the current study the implications of working with translations. The fact that many (though not all) peripheral authors self-translate, or participate in the Castilian translation, may reduce the tension between the original works and the texts that I have used. That said, critics have observed differences between these versions even in the case of Bernardo Atxaga, who considers the Castilian translation to be the same book as the Basque original. I must defer discussion of these variances for future studies, however.

1

TOWARD IRRESOLUTION: THE FIGHT OVER
HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE SPANISH NOVEL

Reconstructed buildings are de facto new buildings, tending to reflect the culture and times of their creators, rather than being faithful reproductions of the original. . . . Because reconstructions do involve conjecture to a greater or less degree, the tendency will be for their architects to be unconsciously prone to other influences.

Nicholas Stanley-Price
“The Reconstruction of Ruins: Principles and Practice”

1.1. Introduction: Symbolic Skirmishes

On November 20, 2010, the thirty-fifth anniversary of Francisco Franco's death, a demonstration by the Federación Estatal de Foros por la Memoria, held at the Valle de los Caídos monument outside of Madrid, put on display the violence (verbal and threatened) that the memory of the Spanish Civil War continues to provoke. As reported in the Spanish press (Junquera, "Tensión"), riot police had to stand between demonstrators of the leftwing group, which carried Republican flags and called for the demolition of the giant cross overlooking the monument, and ultra conservatives who had been turned away from an anniversary mass in honor of Franco because of construction at the basilica. According to the center-right newspaper *El Mundo*, the latter group, gathered illegally, met members of the Federación Estatal de Foros por la Memoria with shouts of "Viva Franco" and the singing of the Falangist anthem "Cara al sol" ("Tensión"). According to the center-left *El País*, the group of "neonazis" chanted obscene insults at the "partidarios de la memoria histórica," some of whom responded by calling for a reprise of the extralegal mass executions of supposed enemies of the Republic in 1936 at Paracuellos de Jarama (Junquera). The fight, waged with shouts at the Valle de los Caídos, and through subtext in the press – *El País*'s "neonazis" became *El Mundo*'s "[p]artidarios . . . de Francisco Franco" – continues to be organized along ideological

lines, with the contemporary left and right sympathizing with past lefts and rights, or even seeing themselves as inheritors of pre-war ideologies.

I use this incident as a graphic example of the continued passion that is still generated in the debate over what is commonly termed historical memory of the twentieth-century cycle that has shaped the nation's present form. The interpretation of the significance of the military coup against the Republic in 1936, the Civil War (from 1936-1939), Franco's ensuing dictatorship (which lasted until his death in 1975), and the transition to the current democratic regime, is anything but settled in Spanish society.³ Historical memory or "memoria histórica," a term used so frequently in Spain as to threaten semantic slippage, in critical, political, popular, and media discourses most often refers to the awareness, study, documentation, and representation of past events and figures, especially of those that are considered to have been previously silenced.

In Spanish calls to remember, which are believed to have increased in frequency starting in 1996 when the Partido Popular took over the national government from the Socialist Party (Espinosa 129, Corral 240), such an awareness is often associated with the proclamation of injustice and the vindication of history's losers, as well as the narration of their stories. Granting voice to history's losers and interpreting their actions as formative to a Democratic Spanish society have taken on great importance in cultural production. These stances are often seen as ways to correct the silencing of Republican perspectives of history during the years of state-controlled information under Franco and

3 Even as I revised this chapter in May 2011, in the wake of Spain's elections and urban camp-outs by groups of "indignados" protesting political corruption and high unemployment, the debate over historical memory refused to fade from the headlines, as intellectuals vehemently questioned the objectivity of the entries on Franco and other figures in the then newly released *Diccionario biográfico español* published by the Real Academia de la Historia. One of the primary objections was that in the "Franco" entry, the term "dictator" is never applied to him.

during the first two decades of democracy.

As seen in the rally at the Valle de los Caídos and its depiction in the press, memory polemics focus upon matters such as what to do with surviving Francoist monuments and what terms to apply to those allied with former and current ideologies. That the stakes of the fight are symbolic representation, the raw material of literature, leads to some initial question for the analysis of contemporary novels on the Francoist past: Do they formulate themselves as battlegrounds in the fight over memory? Are the fictional works' interpretations of the past autonomous from the discourses of the political arena? Do they sympathize with one side or the other? Do they offer salvos or solutions in such debates, new interpretations to what the war has meant and how it was caused?

Taking into account contemporary literature's entrenched concern with the act of writing, the novel furthermore carries the potential (realized in some Spanish works) for inquiries into what is often taken for granted in political discussions: the knowability and narrability of the past. Consideration of this ground points to several more analytical questions: What relationship do novels establish between the past and the present? Following the distinction Jo Labanyi draws in her essay "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War," do war novels follow the form of the historical novel, narrating from a past temporal perspective and thus protectively sealing off the past from present? Or, as novels of memory, do they incorporate a present-tense reconstruction that implies the past's lingering effects? What material – physical traces, recorded narration, mental memory – serves to reconstruct the past? Can the past be translated accurately into the narrative

genre? What sort of approach is appropriate for narrating unspeakable horrors that continue to weigh on the formation of Spanish identity? Labanyi has famously concentrated on motifs of ghosts and haunting in memory works. In her view, use of the motif is “more ethical” than docu-realism because it admits that “no narrative of atrocities can do justice to the pain of those who experienced such atrocities at firsthand” (111). How then do novels on Spain’s past incorporate or appropriate the perspective of history’s victims?

Taking into account these questions, in the current chapter, I propose a critical approach to memory works that considers their potential to contribute to the memory debate but that sets them free from the obligation to do so. While novels can (and sometimes do) construct arguments in line with the discourse in favor of historical memory, I aim to stress one of the characteristics of fiction that sets it apart from other forms of writing: its ability to investigate as much as it affirms. I will first contextualize the recent “memory boom” (Labanyi 95) of cultural production within the trajectory of Spanish literature on the Civil War in order to underscore the new relationship between contemporary authors and Spain’s past. On the one hand, the growing gap of time between the war and the present allows the author a range of ideological and emotive distance from the subject matter. Furthermore, the need to bridge time opens up to fictional exploration of how the past is preserved or must be reconstructed. On the other hand, the drive to improve what are seen as deficiencies in Spain’s understanding of its past provides an impetus against viewing history with neutral distance or concentrating exclusively on investigation of literary referentially.

Much criticism of contemporary historical texts written by Spaniards reflects this

impetus. I analyze therefore the dominant approach to reading historical works, which evaluates the novel according its participation in the project to recover the past in order to heal Spanish society or make it more just. This critical approach falls within what I will term memorialism: the belief, expressed in the efforts of activists, speeches of politicians, history books, media columns, and many other modes of cultural expression, that Spain has much to gain from remembering the victims of its history and honoring them through legislation and representation.

Though as a scholar I sympathize with efforts to discover and record knowledge of the past, as well as with the call to restore dignity to victims of past injustices, such as the Republicans killed in war or executed in reprisals, who remain buried in mass graves across Spain, I wish to point out some of the dangers of pressing the novel to promote a healing memory. First, I argue that demands that a literary work adopt even a laudable ideological program may stifle the novel's potential to investigate and raise questions, to simultaneously assert and deny possibilities and create new understandings. Following Wolfgang Iser's theory describing the creation of meaning in the reading process, I argue that novels that contain a greater degree of uncertainty offer a richer approach to representing the difficulty Spanish society faces in recovering its past and narrating it in the present. Novels that do not continue to fight against the grain of Francoism, to adopt David Herzberger's term, enjoy greater freedom to test the limits of the text in dialectical play between traces of the past and their transformation into narration.

Secondly, I argue that memorialist criticism, which often metaphorically describes Spain as a body that may be treated with memory, inadvertently or not, proposes a unitary, even if ideologically divided, model for the nation. Psychological and

physiological interpretations of Spain do not factor in that for many in the Spanish peripheries, particularly in the Basque Country and Catalonia, the cycle of war, dictatorship, and transition hold separate sets of meanings and identitary implications. I may cite as one example the request by the Basque government in 2007, upon the seventieth anniversary of the bombing of Gernika, that the Spanish government officially apologize for the massacre. (The German government did so in 1997.) In its statements, the Basque Nationalist Party (henceforth PNV) argued that the Spanish government has “toda la legitimidad democrática para condenar la dictadura franquista y para pedir perdón por todos los crímenes cometidos en nombre de España” (Elguea). The Basque Socialist Party, for its part, denounced the request arguing that it falsely implies that the Civil War pitted Spain against the Basque Country (Elguea). The request was never acted upon by the Spanish government.

One can certainly make the case that the Spanish government’s condemnation of Franco’s coup and his regime’s human rights violations, reiterated in the 2007 Memory Law (“Ley 52/2007” 53410), set a precedent for demands of further, similar denunciations. At any rate, whether or not the PNV intentionally wished to implicitly frame the war as a struggle between the Basque Country and Spain, what I wish to stress is how the destruction of Gernika solicits different interpretations and points of contention from Basque and Spanish national politicians. As Paddy Woodworth summarizes, the town, its famous oak tree, and its assembly house carry varying resonances: “One on the one hand they represent a universal tradition of democracy and human rights, reinforced by the anti-fascist imagery sent around the world by Picasso. On the other hand, they represent the *fueros*, a . . . political regime which is sentimentally

precious to Basque nationalists . . .” (*The Basque Country* 62). The example is one indication that Spain’s “other” literatures, because they address and debate particular histories/memories, cannot be subsumed into nation-wide literary or critical narratives.

Recent literature on the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist legacy must be understood within the broader re-evaluation of history taking part in Spain. That Spain’s national drama remains unresolved in the minds of many is clear not only in the intense debates over memory, or incidents like the one at the Valle de los Caídos, but also in the volume of cultural activity related to the re-conception of the past that has taken place since the late 1990s, from protests to legislation, from history books to thriller films to novels. Such activity has been so intense that it would be impossible to address all of it in the present study of literature. One of the most visible and controversial examples has been the effort, led by the grass-roots group Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (or ARMH), starting in 2000, to locate and excavate the mass graves of Republican victims of battle and reprisals under Francoism in order to document the extent of extralegal executions and provide the dead with more appropriate burials. A second equally controversial measure has been the passing of the Ley de Memoria Histórica in 2007, which in broad terms sought to redress Francoist abuses. These efforts have been accompanied by countless media reports and opinion columns in their support or opposition. The polemical nature of some of these columns and of the dispute between Spain’s politicians on historical memory policy has converted the Spanish press “en un campo donde se batalla sobre la relación entre el pasado reciente español y la legitimidad de [su] democracia” as Sebastiaan Faber, Pablo Sánchez León, and Jesús Izquierdo Martín write (70). The past, reinterpreted through a contemporary political lens, has

become a means of staking out ideological positions and gaining moral authority.

In general, politicians and intellectuals of the left, who have often indicated sympathy with Republican policies and leaders, have pressed for remembrance (and where possible, reparation) of the Francoist past. The right, conversely, has been more willing to impune the Republic for contributing to the causes of the war and allowing or perpetrating war atrocities and has been more ready to identify positive results of Franco's regime. Spanish conservative politicians have often fought memory legislation arguing that it rekindles old grudges and, rather than promote healing, reopens old wounds (see for example Díez and Cue). The Partido Popular (PP) opposed the 2007 law, which was backed by the governing Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE).

In confirmation of the value placed on representation of the war, the Ley de La Memoria Histórica focuses largely on the public symbolizing of history, rather than the property rights, social policies, and government structures that were at stake in the Civil War itself. The legislation took some practical measures such as offering Spanish nationality to the descendants of exiles and members of the Republican international brigades, as well as establishing reparations for certain victims of political reprisals. However, it regulates also the symbolic commemorations of the dictatorial regime. For example, it calls for new protocols governing the Valle de los Caídos, which contains Franco's grave and was originally constructed, in part by political prisoners, as a site to bury and exalt those who had died participating in the uprising against the Republic. The law now prohibits, "actos de naturaleza política ni exaltadores de la Guerra Civil, de sus protagonistas, o del franquismo" at the Valle de los Caídos (like the one held by the *ultras* described above) and establishes the site as a monument for both sides of the war, "con

objeto de profundizar en el conocimiento de este período histórico y de los valores constitucionales” (“Ley 52/2007” 53414-5).

The law also calls for the removal from around the nation of public symbols – emblems, plaques, or commemorative names – paying homage to the Nationalist war effort, its leadership, and the subsequent regime. The survival of such symbols for decades after Franco’s death have caused outrage among some on the left. For example, enforcement of the law calling for their removal is one of the missions of the Federación Estatal de Foros por la Memoria. Figuring this effort in combative terms, the group invites the public to participate in “La caza del monumento fascista,” identifying such public displays and posting photos of them in a section of its Web site (*Foro por la memoria*).

1.2. Memory in the Fictional Mode

Cultural activity centered on the Spanish past has included the memory boom or “*moda de la memoria*” (Faber, “Price of Peace” 206) in film and prose fiction, the great increase since the late 1990s in the number of works exploring the topic. There appears to be an inexhaustible appetite for representations of the war and dictatorship in the cultural marketplace, whether such representations simply mine the periods for dramatic story lines or reflect critically on the past by examining the causes of conflicts, its ethical implications, and its meaning today. The present-day vantage point offers authors a wide range of potential points of focus, from the adventure of conflict, to the metafictional exploration of how narrations may recover long-past events.

Narration on the war began immediately after the historical events themselves. A

review of all the literature written on the Civil War or the dictatorship would go well beyond the scope of this study; even by 1974, Maryse Bertrand de Muñoz claimed, more than seven hundred novels on the Spanish Civil War had been published worldwide, the majority by Spaniards (199). I will however provide a brief sketch in order to expose past tendencies and emphasize the diversity in contemporary war novels.⁴

I would tentatively suggest that contemporary writing on the war is marked by a tendency toward narrative distance from the events of the 1930s. That is, novelists who have no direct memory of the war or of the darkest years of Francoism – no memory of Francoism at all in the case of Spain’s youngest writers – tend to include framing devices that emphasize the process through which the past is discovered. The veracity of the past as narrated is no longer taken for granted but is established through investigations or the citation of sources, and at times is still left in doubt. I make the argument tentatively because a number of recent Civil War works stand against this observation. Indeed, the production of the Memory Boom has been too diverse to fit any common characteristics. Perhaps, as I shall elaborate, what most marks the contemporary novel of memory is precisely the growing range of possibilities now open for it, the heterodox ideological, narrative, and temporal approaches authors are now taking.

According to scholarly studies (for example Reig; Colmeiro, *Memoria histórica*; Paloma Aguilar, *Memoria y olvido*), the Franco years began with a burst of triumphalist films and novels in line with official discourse on the war that proclaimed it a victorious

4 Labanyi’s “Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War” serves as an introduction to production in the war since the transition period. Alberto Reig Tapia provides a lengthy bibliography of Civil War works in pages 41-67 of *Memoria de la Guerra Civil: los mitos de la tribu*. José Colmeiro (*Memoria histórica*) and David Herzberger (*Narrating the Past*) analyze in depth selections of historical memory works (not all of them directly relating to the war) dating back to the immediate postwar.

crusade of traditional Catholic Spain over immoral foreign influences (for example certain novels of Rafael García Serrano and the film *Raza*, written in part by Franco himself). Subsequently, depictions of the war not in line with the state's version of history were written obliquely enough to pass censorship. Carmen Laforet's *Nada* and José Camilo Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, for example, have been read by some critics as allegorical renderings of the lurking violence and divisions within Spanish society. Works overtly sympathetic to the Republican side or Republican characters, such as R. J. Sender's *Réquiem por un campesino español* or Max Aub's *El laberinto mágico* tetralogy (works that by no means propose Manichean pro-Republican visions of the war), were produced in exile.

Within Spain, writers began adopting more of less open pro-Republican stances after the loosening of censorship declared in the 1966 Ley de Prensa, according to Bertrand de Muñoz. As of 1974, the critic wrote:

[P]rácticamente no se encuentran ya desde hace unos años a autores que no critiquen, o por lo menos no juzguen negativamente varios aspectos de la actitud de los franquistas durante la guerra y después de ésta; a veces analizan la situación con objetividad y les conceden ciertas virtudes, pero lo cierto es que nadie condena ya a los leales al gobierno . . . como se hiciera anteriormente. (201)

Notably, in the same study, Bertrand de Muñoz records that in the late years of Francoism, authors were using memory structures – “la de presentar una acción situada en la posguerra, y a partir de allá, por medio de la vueltas al pasado, referir hechos transcurridos durante la guerra” – in order to emphasize the long-lasting importance of the war (205). Labanyi has noticed the use of haunting motifs to represent the continuing effects of the past in films of the same period, such as Victor Erice's 1973 *El espíritu de la colmena* and Carlos Saura's 1976 *Cría cuervos* (97-8). The subjective remembering of

the past by an ordinary Spaniard, often through images produced in popular culture, forms one of the main themes of Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*, published in 1976. Perhaps the best-known fictional work to focus on history during the transition, this novel proposes a disorganized recovery of every-day memory as a counterpoint to official historiography.

According to Labanyi, the early years of democracy saw a great number of documentary works on the war that could be produced without the fetters of censorship, but few novels or films (95). This initial output was followed by relative silence on the topic. The first well-known novel thematizing the war (and doing so from a Republican standpoint), did not appear until Julio Llamazares's *Luna de lobos* (1985). However, that book was followed up by an increasing number of films and novels that focused on the war or the dictatorship, such as Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Beatus Ille* (1986), Carlos Saura's *Ay Carmela* (1990, based on José Sanchís Sinisterra's eponymous play), and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *Autobiografía del general Franco* (1992). Whereas Vázquez Montalbán's novels⁵ directly denounce the distortion of history and truth as carried out by repressive regimes and subsequent powerful interests, Muñoz Molina focuses far less on politics, relegating the war and its causes to the background as it investigates and inverts author-reader relationships.

One model used to categorize the current memory boom and previous Civil War art describes a progression in genealogical terms that grants younger writers greater emotional distance from the past. This model is adopted in some form by Paloma Fernández Aguilar, Enrique Moradiellos, and Carmen de Urioste, among others. The

⁵ I consider *Galíndez* a novel of Spanish historical memory as well, since it transfers Spanish politics of memory to the Trujillato of the Dominican Republic.

pattern (with some variation) suggests that the “grandparents” generation, that is, the generation that fought or witnessed the war, was capable only of impassioned, partisan writing that blamed the enemy for the war. This partisanship was exacerbated by the constraints of the official discourses on the war within Spain (pro-Nationalist) and within exiled communities (pro-Republican), as well as by the urgency to resist felt by the opposition within Spain. Of the later group, Maarten Steenmeijer writes, “Por mucho que la narrativa quisiera combatir la política y cultura oficiales – en un principio con su compromiso político, luego con su experimentalismo –, no pudo evitar ser, en cierto sentido, tan estrecha de miras como el régimen contra el que se rebelaba” (141).

The “children’s” generation, eager to shed the burdens of the past and to modernize/Europeanize the nation, forged the transition to democracy, based on a so-called pact of silence on the war, and created the culture of the “movida,” with the image of Spain as, in Labanyi’s words, a “young, brash, ultramodern nation” (94). For this generation, Enrique Moradiellos writes, the “conflict was a ‘collective tragedy’ and a ‘fratricidal madness’” (223), with little emphasis placed on individuals’ decisions and actions as being responsible for the war. Maarten Steenmeijer, in an article that focuses on Eduardo Mendoza and what could be called two younger members of the “children’s generation,” Javier Marías (born 1951), and Antonio Muñoz Molina (1956), argues that Franco has become taboo in Spanish literature, taken on only in exceptional cases such as that of Muñoz Molina. Interestingly, Steenmeijer writes that the following generation will have to document, imagine, and fictionalize Francoism, since it did not experience it directly, but probably won’t because writers like José Ángel Maraña, Ray Loriga and David Trueba “Están demasiado ocupados con la España hedonista en que viven como

para interesarse por el pasado reciente” (153). In fact, many in the generation of “grandchildren” of Civil War veterans, more detached from the trauma of the past, but eager to reverse the years of silence on the topic and bring to light its causes and crimes, are bringing memory of the war to fore and critically examining its legacy.

The “memory boom” of the late 1990s onward has continued even since Labanyi’s 2007 article, with some of Spain’s best-known authors, including older, well established ones such as Muñoz Molina and Mendoza, publishing Civil War-themed novels in 2009 and 2010, respectively.⁶

Many translations into Castilian of works written in Basque, Catalan, and Galician that thematize the war or postwar have also been published during the same period. These include (listed by original title and Spanish translated title; dates refer to publication of translation): *Gorde nazazu lurpean/Guérdame bajo tierra* (Ramon Saizarbitoria, 2001), *Gerezi denbora/Tiempo de cerezas* (Inazio Mujika Iraola, 1999), *Les veus del Pamano/Las voces del Pamano* (Jaume Cabré, 2007), *Pa negre/Pan negro* (Emili Teixidor, 2004), *La meitat de l’ànima/La mitad del alma* (Carme Riera, 2005), *Memoria do soldado/Memoria de soldado* (Alfredo Conde, 2002), *O lapis do carpinteiro/El lápiz del carpintero* (Manuel Rivas, 1998), *Os libros arden mal/Libros*

6 If any evidence is needed of the popularity of renditions of the war and its immediate aftereffects of repression, resistance, and exile, I offer the following partial list of novels written in Spanish on these topic since the late ’90s that have received attention from academic and press critics: *Mala gente que camina* (Benjamín Prado, 2006), *Soldados de Salamina* (Javier Cercas, 2001), *La sima* (José María Merino, 2009), *La voz dormida* (Dulce Chacón, 2002), *El corazón helado* (Almudena Grandes, 2007), the *Verdes valles, colinas rojas* trilogy (Ramiro Pinilla, 2004-2005), *Llegada para mí la hora del olvido* (Tomás Val, 1997), *La noche de los cuatro caminos. Una historia de maquis, 1945* (Andrés Trapiello, 2001), *Días y noches* (Andrés Trapiello, 2000), *Enterrar a los muertos* (Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, 2005), the trilogy *El tiempo del exilio* (Jordi Sierra i Fabra, 2003), *Maquis* (Alfons Cervera, 1997), *La noche inmóvil* (Alfons Cervera, 1999), *Aquel invierno*, (Alfons Cervera, 2005), *La hija del caníbal* (Rosa Montero, 1997), *El nombre que ahora digo* (Antonio Soler, 1999), *Las guerras de Etruria* (Julio Manuel de la Rosa, 2000), *Un largo silencio* (Ángeles Caso, 2000), *El rescoldo* (Joaquín Leguina, 2004), *Los rojos de ultramar* (Jordi Soler, 2004), *La fiesta del oso* (Jordi Soler, 2009), *La noche de los tiempos* (Antonio Muñoz Molina, 2009), *Riña de gatos* (Eduardo Mendoza, 2010), and *Un encargo difícil* (Pedro Zarraluki, 2005).

arden mal (Manuel Rivas, 2006), and *Home sen nome/Hombre sin nombre* (Susó de Toro, 2006).

Even as some writers and critics cry for an end to silence on the war, other authors, through their works, have expressed tedium on the topic, or, at the very least, its literary renditions. In *¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil!* (2007), Isaac Rosa republishes his own 1999 novel *La malamemoria* with the addition of the angry commentary of a reader who has supposedly hacked into original manuscript and points out the novel's flaws, including the overuse of clichés of memory literature. Salvador Gutiérrez Solís's *El batallón de los perdedores* (2006) farcically parodies *Soldados de Salamina* by portraying the creation of a war novel by a group of authors who, like Cercas's narrator, lack the creativity to invent a plot. The project is carried out at the request of a publisher/real estate speculator despite the primary ghost writer's warning "Eso ya está muy visto, se han escrito dos o tres mil, y casi todas muy malas, hasta las que vendieron. . . . Cualquier crítico nos diría que toquemos otro asunto menos trillado . . ." (15).

The recent output of war novels is too diverse in aspects such as temporal setting, narrative framing, and ideological commitment to make possible a summary of common characteristics. The authors represented span generational outlooks: Mendoza, born in 1943, lived through much of the dictatorship, while authors the age of Isaac Rosa (born 1974) have no direct recollection of the Franco years. The novels range in tone; on one end of the spectrum lies Dulce Chacón's docu-fictional vindication of the women who suffered prison terms and executions in the early postwar in *La voz dormida*. On the other end is Mendoza's *Riña de gatos*, which lacks the farcical satire of his other works, but

nonetheless juxtaposes discussion of the causes of the war and the ideologies of figures such as José Antonio Primo de Rivera to comedic characters, such as a hard-drinking gullible protagonist investigator and a good-hearted prostitute, and to intrigues such as the failed attempts to verify the authenticity of an unknown Velázquez painting.

Mendoza's and Muñoz Molina's books, both set in Madrid during the eve/early days of the war, focus more on the tense atmosphere – seen in the vain but ominous speeches of politicians, the outbreaks of uncontrollable mob violence – than on weighing the morality of the two sides' stances.

The growing temporal distance from the war however does not always necessarily translate into texts' greater emotional distance from it, as evidenced by the moving stories told in the highly empathetic *La voz dormida*. Nor, as we shall see in the partisan polemics of *Mala gente que camina*, does every author take a bird's eye view of divisions of the past. What, then, can be said as defining the Civil War novels of the late 1990s and 2000s, besides the freedom to sympathize with the Republican side, as the majority of the better known works have done? There is no question that many of the novels stress the need to narrate the stories of those forgotten by history. However, novels like Mendoza's and Muñoz Molina's latest, focusing on the war's most famous figures, such as Indalacio Prieto and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, buck the trend. The inclusion of the investigation of the past is also frequent, though not universal. The same may be said of the emphasis on the interaction between generations and how memory is transferred. It appears in many novels, such as *El lápiz del carpintero* through the fantastic device of the carpenter's pencil, which transmits the stories narrated by the long-dead Daniel da Barca to his former prison guard Herbal, who relays them to a young prostitute named María da

Visitação. But generational transferal is absent from some of the novels set entirely within in the past, such as Mujika's *Tiempo de cerezas* or Zarraluki's *Un encargo difícil*.

Temporal distance and exploration of how the past is investigated have not always translated into doubt about the possibility of accurately recovering the past, as Jo Labanyi points out:

[T]here has been an overall move from the use of the trope of haunting, which characterized the films made at the end of the dictatorship and the novels written in the mid-1980s, to a preference for realist and documentary formats. This overall move has coincided with the change from a lack of interest in the memorialization of the civil war to the present memory boom. Curiously, this memory boom has not translated into an increased interest in the workings of memory but into an assumption that the past can be unproblematically recovered. (106)

One example of an unproblematic recovery of the past occurs in Almudena Grandes's *El corazón helado* in which third-person narrations set in the past revolving around a heroic Republican family alternate with a first-person present-day protagonist's investigation of his recently deceased father's relationship with that family and theft of its property. While it is true that the protagonist's investigations require much time and effort and brings grave consequences for his marriage, career, and relationships with his family, the wholeness of the truth that he discovers (already known to other characters and to the omniscient narrator) is not placed in any doubt. Only the question of if/how the protagonist will seek to make amends for his father's actions are left open. In *La voz dormida*, the investigation is mentioned only in the author's afterword, in which she thanks those who participated in the novel's documentation. Perhaps Labanyi's observation applies to a number of novels because memorialist arguments require that the past be accessible; such arguments suggest that it is the indifference of the many and the interests of some (those who benefited from Francoism) that has kept the past buried,

rather than the passage of time. Memory might prove a less satisfactory remedy to national ailments, furthermore, if it is composed of doubt and aporia. A need to counteract the manipulation of history during the years of state control of information may serve to counter-balance post-modern skepticism of narrative and truth.

I must point out, however, that certain novels (some written too late for inclusion in Labanyi's essay), in their formulations of the investigation of the past, do in fact show marked interest in the workings of memory and the limits of reconstructing the past. In *Soldados de Salamina* for example, the protagonist often wonders about the influence that narration places upon what is transmitted from memory into speech or writing, and how social interaction alters accounts of the past. Bernardo Atxaga's *El hijo del acordeonista* stresses the contingency of memory and the multiplicity of truth as told in a perspectivist narration. The announced investigation of a reporter in Suso de Toro's *Hombre sin nombre* is quickly frustrated, suggesting that the past is not always readily recalled.

One frequent, though certainly not universal, structural device is the use of hybrid narration. Rather than depend on a traditional authoritative third-person or first-person voice, many novels of memory alternate narrators, span multiple genres, and insert documentary texts such as newspaper articles, official dispatches, journals, and letters. Typical enough in postmodern texts, in memory literature such structures may serve to mimic the functioning of collective versus individual memory, emphasize the subjectivity of truth or the difficulty of ciphering it, or explore the alterations that take place in the transferal of traces of the past into narration. A number of historical novels, in contrast, such as *Un encargo difícil*, the 2005 winner of the Premio Nadal, employ straightforward

narrations in the realist tradition

Because the recent reawakening of interest in the Francoist past has met with diverse literary responses, we may only speak of common points of accent and recurring motifs, such as investigation, vindication of victims, generational transmission, and multiple narration. The one definite common point for recent Civil War books is that their having been written in the context of so much memory activity obligates them to adapt, manipulate, or avoid the re-interpretations of the past that have become favored since the late 1990s. Authors have opted for varying degrees of sympathy with the Republic, commitment to addressing past injustices and assigning blame, and problematization of the recoverability of the truth.

1.3. The Critical Call for Memory

Published literary criticism of Civil War literature of the last ten to fifteen years may be divided very broadly according to two points of emphasis: the first on literature's role in developing a culture of memory, the second on the formalistic devices used to transmit memory. I should emphasize that critics typically address both historical and formal matters in memory texts, so the distinction is based on which aspect is prioritized. In the group of critics displaying a marked commitment to vindicating the memory of Spanish history's losers, I place José Colmeiro, Jacqueline Cruz, Ofelia Ferrán, Jerelyn Johnson, Ignacio Soldevila Durante, and Carmen de Urioste. Other critics of Spanish memory literature, such as the participants in three volumes of essays edited individually or co-edited by Joan Ramon Resina and Ulrich Winter, many of them non-Spaniards, display a greater degree of emotional distance from Spain's memory debates and focus

upon theoretical understandings of memory, in particular Pierre Nora's concept of places of memory. I advocate here a reading of memory works that analyzes how novels construct the Spanish past, with a focus on how novels investigate the process of recovery, rather than a reading that demands literature take part in healing Spanish society.

Through a critique of common arguments in favor of healing literary memory, I hope to bring to light some of the limitations of the project of discursively redressing past injustices. Leaning on my own observations and those of Sebastiaan Faber and Jo Labanyi, I will point out that a number of commonplaces have arisen in calls for memory, commonplaces that require further critical reflection. In the current section I address two: belief in a "pact of oblivion" or collective amnesia effecting Spain, and the insistence upon the ongoing presence of Francoism in contemporary Spain. These two claims are better understood as building blocks in the argument for recovering victims' memories than as descriptions of Spanish society, since they depend on abstractions that may not always be solidly grounded in historical fact. More importantly to my project, as I will point out in the sections that follow, much literature of memory derives its force precisely by scrutinizing the ways in which these claims are true or false. Furthermore, the arguments in favor of a recovery of victims' memory carry certain, perhaps unintended, consequences in defining contemporary Spanish identity by metaphorically constructing it as a singular entity.

If I may describe the dominant trend in broad terms, a line of criticism that incorporates the theses of some left-leaning historians, writers, and activists argues that Spain is suffering the consequences of amnesia, in large part as a legacy of the imposed

silence of the Franco years, the amnesties granted under the transition to democracy, and the lack of any judicial review or truth commission. What I call “memorialist” criticism (because of its focus on memory as both ethically right and beneficial) sees some literary works as participating in a much-needed effort to unbury the past, expose injustices, and return justice to victims, and describes other works as missed opportunities to do so. It should be noted that the critics I include in this category often diverge or reflect critically upon some of the points I will describe below, but all may be considered as advocating for more memory.

Ofelia Ferrán, in her book *Working Through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*, offers one of the longest and best crafted expression within literary criticism of a call for healing. A quick synthesis of the book’s main points will reflect the most common arguments in support of memory. Ferrán writes that Spain has never come to grips with its traumatic past, perhaps because of the length of the dictatorship and its gradual loosening of repression; that the transition operated upon a pact of silence and never tried those responsible for overthrowing a democratic government and committing human rights abuses, resulting in national disenchantment; that the official government stance following the death of Franco was to forget the past in order to concentrate on modernization; that such a stance resulted in commemorations that did not investigate the past critically, culminating in the 1992 quinqucentenary of “el encuentro” between Spain and the Americas; that the ARMH has finally begun addressing the injustices of the past; that Spain must develop “a much-needed culture of memory” (15); that the literature she analyzes can and does contribute to the project of creating a culture of memory.

Much of the literary criticism written on the war in the 2000s has taken as its point of departure that Francoism's worst aspects and the plight of its victims have been silenced and forgotten both during the dictatorship and the democratic period. However, I would argue that the paradoxical notion of a "pact of the oblivion" agreed to by Spaniards or by their political institutions during the transition, has taken on a life of its own, its definition slipping, at times unexamined, between the effort to prevent the past from determining Spain's future, and amnesia of the past. A close look at the invocation of the existence of silence/amnesia to justify a need to bring the past to light suggests that it does not refer as much to the absence of discussion on the war, as the absence of a particular viewpoint on the past.

It is true that Spain's official reaction to the end of Francoism differed from that of other Spanish-speaking countries that saw transitions from dictatorship to democracy. Waisman and Rein theorize that this is because the human rights violations at stake in reckonings with the past "had taken place decades before, most perpetrators and their victims were dead, and collective stocktaking had been taking place, sometimes silently, for a generation before" (ix). In contrast to Spain, Chile (Rettig Commission, initiated 1990; Valech Commission, 2003), Argentina (CONADEP, 1983), and Uruguay (Comisión Para la Paz, 2000) have held truth commissions that investigated and made public abuses committed under recent military dictatorships. In Uruguay, two former rulers have been tried and received long prison sentences. In Spain, the amnesty passed in the transition period has ruled out anything like the Nuremberg Trials or the quasi-judicial hearings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Historians have disagreed however, over the precise nature and even the existence

of Spain's amnesia. The prominent historian Santos Juliá has forcefully argued that Franco's opposition quickly realized that an amnesty would be necessary to build a peaceful democracy, a realization based on a keen awareness of what had taken place in the past. The volume of writing on the war, Juliá further argues, should be enough to dispel what he calls "[e]sta montaña de propaganda sobre el silencio y el olvido." Espinosa offers as one counterargument the documentation of historians' struggles (including his own) to gain access to archives supposedly open to the public but protected by the military or local governments; he argues furthermore that Spanish civil society never forgot or desired to ignore the war, but that "la amnesia . . . les fue impuesta" at the initiative of the remnants of the Francoist regime and the opposing political parties still fearing another military takeover ("Acuerdo" 201). In her seminal *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española*, Paloma Aguilar Fernández searches for evidence that consciousness of the Civil War and dictatorship affected politicians' decision making during the transition. Thus, she emphasizes the presence of the past, the deliberate creation of taboo, rather than a forgetting of the past. She argues, as historian Enrique Moradiellos summarizes in agreement, that there "was basically a conscious agreement to avoid the use of the past in public as an instrument of the political struggle" (*Memoria y olvido* 223). Historians have at times complained over what they see as Spaniards' ignorance of the facts of the war, but none suggests ultimately that the average Spaniard does not have a readily accessible mental image of its history.

The meaning of Spanish amnesia then boils down to several questions: did Spaniards forget the past, make it taboo, or get cut off from accurate information on the past? Did civil society in general or elites participate in the forgetting, and did one group

of power brokers impose it on others? These questions remain unresolved by specialists. Calls for memory based on the grounds of amnesia therefore seem to rest on shaky foundations. Amnesia, in my view, may only be applied accurately in a metaphorical sense of a failure to act upon the lessons or demands of the past, of failure in interpretation rather than of memory itself. Still, Jo Labanyi correctly points out that the existence of an “alleged ‘pact of oblivion’” among the politicians negotiating the new democracy during the transition “has become a commonplace” that is “taken for granted” in critiques of memory and cultural representation (93, 93 n. 11).

An essay like Jacqueline Cruz’s “*Para que no olvidemos: La propuesta de recuperación de la memoria histórica de Patricia Ferreira*” displays the tendency to describe Spain as a society not guided by the past but lacking necessary information about it. Cruz simultaneously affirms that Spain has engaged in a “*deliberada desmemoria*” and bears a “*necesidad de luchar contra la amnesia*” (31). The later notion especially suggests that information on the past, rather than having been made taboo, has actually disappeared, and must be recovered. Writers such as José Colmeiro, Gregorio Morán, and Teresa Vilarós criticize the transition as a tainted process in which Spain failed to bring to its consciousness its traumatic past and to confront the crimes of Francoism, deferring to the authority of the dictatorial regime and allowing some of its members to remain in power.

By distinguishing between the availability of scholarly research and popular knowledge, Faber refines the concept of forgetting so that calls for memory may be reconciled with the extant volumes of history books. As he points out, “a topic’s interest among professional historians is not the same as social acceptance – that is, the entry of a

certain vision of history into the public sphere, popular consciousness, and public-school textbooks” (“Price of Peace” 209). The difficulty of measuring popular consciousness certainly makes possible diverging opinions on the state of Spain’s collective knowledge of the war. But Faber’s observation, to extrapolate, further points out that the lack of a “certain vision of history” may be conceived of as silence. In other words, what is being promoted is not just awareness and discussion of facts but a particular interpretation and use of them. The ARMH, in calling for memory, also demands that memory lead to exhumations of the dead and condemnation of their murders.

Another motif that recurs in the call for memory is the claim that the past is still present in Spain, that the injustices to be addressed are ongoing, not matters for history books. This trope avoids the vagaries of retroactive justice by implying that there is much work left to be done to dismantle a still-current version of Francoism.

Examples of the trope include Ferrán’s paraphrasing of Faulkner as the epigraph to *Working Through Memory*: “The past is not over, it is not even past” (13). In her argument, failure to work through the traumatic past has left Spain’s wounds open. Similarly, the historian Alberto Reig Tapia asserts “Es inútil intentar correr un tupido velo sobre el pasado. El pasado siempre vuelve” (38). Examples of unfinished business of the past that Tapia cites include the street names and monuments honoring one side of the conflict but not the other and the continued existence of mass graves of victims.

In the Valencia edition of *El País*, Manuel Peris sets out a list of what he considers legacies of Franco – such as the judicial process against judge Baltasar Garzón for his investigation of crimes against humanity committed by the Franco regime. He writes:

Espanoles, Franco ha vuelto. La guerra no ha terminado. Una moneda ha sido lanzada al aire. En la cara figura la efigie del juez Garzón. En la cruz, el espíritu del franquismo. . . . El espíritu de Franco es una adherencia (por decirlo finamente), una pústula incrustada en la mente de la derecha española. . . . El pequeño franquismo de cada día sale por donde menos te lo esperas. . . . [A]un en el supuesto de que la guerra hubiera terminado, lo que es evidente es que la dichosa transición española aún no ha llegado a fin. No, la guerra aún no ha terminado. La moneda sigue dando vueltas en el aire . . . veremos qué pasa con Garzón.

While it is clear that the past holds a powerful sway over the production of culture and identity of Spaniards, just how Francoism has shaped living conditions is an extremely complex matter. However, Peris's polemical formulation, in which *franquismo* could be substituted with any number of abstract negative nouns, is too fraught with vagueness to address how or why Franco's influence continues to exert itself.

This is not to say that there have not been studies of surviving institutions, phenomena, or injustices that demonstrably owe their roots to Francoism. In film, for example, Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis's 2002 documentary *Els nens perduts del franquisme*, made for Televisió de Catalunya, demonstrates through its interviews the dramatic and ongoing emotional damage caused by the irregular adoptions of the children of Republicans. A recent series of articles in *El País* has reported the existence of mafias that sold or gave away for adoption the babies of supposedly unsuitable mothers, organizations that operated through the last years of the dictatorship and survived even into the democracy.

It certainly can be argued that the Franco years have exacerbated some of the country's challenges, such as the status of the autonomous regions and an economy that lags behind much of Western Europe, but affirmations that the dictator is present in spirit do little by way of exploring the complex cause-and-effect relationships between history

and present conditions. Rather, the depiction of certain contemporary stances as anachronistic remnants of an authoritarian government serves as a persuasive argument.

Literature of memory, rather than proving the argument, explores the many ways in which the past may metaphorically be thought to linger, whether in Labanyi's ghostly forms, or in verbal retelling. Novels offer varying and complex solutions to the question of how and if the past returns. For example, Suso de Toro's *Home sen nome*, clearly sympathetic to the Republican side of the war, narrates victims' past, but doesn't show that Francoism's influence is still present, or argue for the greater visibility of victims. The representative of Francoism in the novel is a solitary, aged, pathetic figure; his influence, long faded, disappears completely with his death, leaving no active legacy of his ideology. The photographs the old man had kept of his murder victims are, since they represent their indignity, mercifully destroyed; victims are thus honored through their passing into oblivion rather than the preservation of their traces.

The critical readings that I have glossed, I should point out, do address the ways in which the past is represented, rather than just assuming it returns un-problematically. Still, I would stress that the past cannot always be read as being alive in works on the war. It is sometimes alive, sometimes transformed, sometimes ghostly, sometimes laid to rest – with both positive and negative consequences.

1.4. Uncertainty in the Text

Accepting that any critical argument must for expediency leave many assumptions unchecked, I have begun to signal where the commonplaces of memorialism can fail to reflect accurately on Spanish society or literature. One of literature's greatest

powers is its ability to expose the cracks in clichés, perhaps not to offer a particular solution, but to replace false certainties with productive questions. As a dominant discourse in historiography, politics and criticism – even if a discourse of resistance, a counter-discourse to an authoritarian discourses of the past – memorialism puts forth a new code that novelists writing on the war must engage, whether they embrace it, deconstruct its commonplaces, write against it, or deflect it.

In my analysis, the novels that offer the richest engagement with Spain's discussion of memory are those that simultaneously embrace memorialism and expose its weaknesses and dangers. A productive literary reading, according to Wolfgang Iser's reader response theory, requires that the text provide a degree of indeterminacy through the use of gaps that allow the reader to create meaning based on the text through a process of ideation. Such gaps may take the form of suspenseful chapter endings in realistic novels that leave the reader to predict plot development or the "relentless negation" of Beckett that puts "pressure on the reader to find out what is being withheld from him" (140-1). In Iser's theory, communication takes place not in the text, but at the moment of reading; the indeterminate text forces greater participation from the reader who works to fill in its gaps.

The topic of memory is especially appropriate for renderings in indeterminate forms because these admit the limitations of reconstructive narration. Because data available on the past can never be identical to the narration extrapolated from a selection of the data, writing on the past, whether fictional or historiographical, always involves interpretation. Memory literature that declines to fill all the gaps of what has taken place concedes that the author interprets, and allows the reader to simulate participation in the

process of reconstruction.

The moral imperative behind memorialism may put it at odds with indeterminacy since lack of knowledge of the past may be confused with the oblivion it combats. Refusal to condemn, likewise, may be confused with neutrality or lack of ethical commitment. But a novel that promotes an ideological stance expressed in newspaper columns and political speeches may miss the opportunity to dialogue and provoke new understanding with a reader. Furthermore, given the lack of consensus on historical memory in Spain, such a novel may stoke the admiration of those who agree with it, but turn away those who do not; As Iser writes,

A text that lays things out before the reader in such a way that he can either accept or reject them will lessen the degree of participation, as it allows him nothing but a yes or a no. Texts with such minimal indeterminacy tend to be tedious, for it is only when the reader is given the chance to participate actively that he will regard the text, whose intention he himself has helped to compose, as real. (10)

I may make my point another way by invoking the argument of the so-called new formalists that reading the text exclusively in order to extract its ideology, or requiring it to follow a certain ideology, risks rendering the text as a manifestation of something other than itself. To do so means losing sight of how literature communicates differently from other discourses. As George Levine puts it, “Literature works in complicated ways and may perhaps in the same sentence resist and affirm. It tests the limits” (20). Literature carries the capacity to comfort and discomfort, to confirm ideas and undermine them. It challenges readers as other genres cannot, exposing them simultaneously to multiple, opposite possibilities. This is not to say that the novel’s ideology is any way irrelevant or should not be examined, but that a critical reading must take into account how the novel may produce, refract, or counter ideology, or do all at the same time.

While some recent novels do argue explicitly in favor of memorialism (for example *Mala gente que camina*), novels that do more than go about proving a single stance are in my view more successful at representing the problems of remembrance of the past in Spain. There is no consensus in Spain on the meaning of its past or what to do with it; assertions akin to one or the other official policies of memory (the PSOE's remembrance, the PP's opposition to digging up the past) risk reading as reductive solutions to the questions' elusive answers.

I am not suggesting that literature has a duty to find a middle ground or be neutral; rather, that it carries the potential to counter received platforms. As the Basque writer Anjel Lertxundi has repeated, "El escritor tiene que incomodar" (Asry), doing so by bringing up topics or criticism of commonly held attitudes that the reader may prefer to ignore. As the repetition of various commonplaces and tropes suggest, memorialism has become a new institutionalized discourse, commonly accepted by many, even if fought by others. With the *Ley de memoria histórica*, the PSOE made official the program of revising official historiography in the name of victims. (Though it must be noted that there are certainly important differences between intellectuals' and the PSOE's interpretations of history, especially as regards the success of the transition, and the forcefulness of memory legislation that is needed). In *Working Through Memory*, Ferrán, citing Nelly Richard and Walter Benjamin, writes that "official versions of the past inevitably reflect the interests of the victors of history, and only come about by repressing the suffering of those on the losing side of power. Those official discourses must be resisted, torn apart, in order for the pain and suffering of victims of the past to be able to emerge through the cracks" (56). Later, Ferrán herself notes the risk of "inevitable"

institutionalization of remembering tied to the 2007 legislation, wondering what will happen when “‘the meaning and value’ of the practice of remembrance embodied in the exhumations change” (280).

My critical reading of memory will seek out ways in which the novel resists the official discourse of calls to memory. Art may provide what Francine Masiello, in description of Argentine street graffiti that identifies perpetrators of past abuses, calls an “alternative citational system.” Alternative citation, freed from the pragmatic aims of institutionalized programs, may, by examining the meaning of the past and producing new understandings, “surpass the inadequate efforts of politicians to rectify violations of human rights” (7), as Masiello writes. A search for the emergence of the text of alternative citational systems can provide the basis for productive readings.

Because not all Spanish novels necessarily seek alternative citation systems, but rather insert themselves within one of the dominant ideologies, I will invoke David Herzberger’s method of examining how novelists in different ways work with or against the grain of such ideologies. In his conclusion to his book on memory/history fiction, *Narrating the Past*, published in 1995, Herzberger writes that:

Freed from the contentious dialogue with a master discourse of history, Spanish narrative moves unconstrainedly through time and text, social circumstance and literary fashion. Readers may still make juxtapositions and consider authorial intention, but the urgency among novelists to write against the historical grain dissipates into the more amorphous field of historical writing – at times with the grain, at times against it, but always, now, disencumbered of the burden of a master history as forged by Francoism. (*Narrating the Past* 156)

Herzberger’s conclusion to a brilliant study provides a caution against predicting the literary future, since, as it turns out, a group of novels have in fact latched onto and lashed out against the master history of Francoism. The end of the state control of

information, though a lifting of an imposition, may have also proven to be a loss of a vertebrating structure that the writer could lean upon/against. Perhaps this is why the freedom Herzberger describes has not always been exercised by those writers of the last decade who declare Francoism to be still alive. Still, we may retain Herzberger's concept of writing with/against the grain as a valuable critical tool for dissecting memory literature's varied stances. In *Narrating the Past*, Herzberger focuses on the dialectic with historical discourse that Spanish novels have elaborated since the beginning of Franco's regime, tracing a progressive dismantling of the historiographical paradigm it imposed. I will ask how texts continue this task, or whether, as Herzberger writes in an essay on Muñoz Molina, they constitute "writing without a grain."

1.5. Memory as Medicine

As I have been suggesting, one of the most frequent arguments for a recovery of memory depends on a metaphor that at times slips into reification: the need to heal the country's wounds, which have been caused by the national trauma. The problem with the logic of this argument is that, meaning to prove the necessity of abstract duties, it tries to point out real symptoms. A lack of health in Spanish society, much less its roots in the failure to reconcile its past, is not a fact that can be proven, nor can it be proven that adapting a new approach to history will improve the nation as a whole. The metaphor, furthermore, takes for granted a unitary model for Spain in which all parts can be cured by a single remedy.

Arguments proposing memory as a means of healing a collective psychology wounded by a historical trauma follow Dominick LaCapra's trauma theory. LaCapra

interprets Freud's analysis of the traumatized individual in his essays "Mourning and Melancholia" and "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through" as being applicable to groups. In the essays, Freud distinguishes between melancholy and mourning. The individual suffering from melancholy repetitively "acts out" the scenario of a traumatic loss, the memory of which has been suppressed. In mourning, the individual is made aware of his behavior and begins to "work-through" the pain of the underlying absence. In trauma theory, the confrontation at the Valle de los Caídos, with its partisan aggression, perhaps becomes an example of the acting out of the repressed memory of war, evidence of a trauma that has not been sufficiently worked through.

I present here a few examples of physiological or psychological figurations that prescribe memory as medicine in Spanish literary criticism: For Ofelia Ferrán, whose word play in her book title *Working through Memory* makes clear her debt to Freudian theory, the nation lacks a "healthy *dissensus*" – that is, a critical dialogue on the past – (42), and must develop a "healthier paradigm" (43); the books she analyzes offer models to promote the "healing of memory" (58). Urioste, who does not directly cite Freud or trauma theory, and implies rather than affirming her agreement with proponents of historical memory, states that such "memoria" seeks to "subsana el 'pacto de olvido' de la reciente historia española" (940). Johnson provocatively entitles one of her essays "Nation Heal Thyself." In another, she affirms that "certain societal players are centralizing, uncovering and discerning the memory of these events in order to consolidate the government into an even stronger, healthier democracy," and that "[c]ultural communication has been saturated with the idea that if Spain does not settle its past sins, or account for them, it can never develop as a healthy democracy"

(“Remembering History” 28). Though the later assertion can be read as a descriptive observation, the former seems to suggest that the actions of “certain societal players” can and are having a desired positive effect. Cruz, for her part, affirms that Spain’s “*olvido deliberado . . . ha empezado a subsanarse en los últimos años*” (31).

These figurations run the risk of reifying Spanish society, of conceiving it as being capable of collectively feeling, suffering ailments, treating itself, and overcoming them. Such terms seem prone to slippage into essentializing definitions of the nation with a more or less healthy body or soul. Here I will agree with Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam’s reminder that psychological processes like memory and sense of identity – though shaped by social interaction – take place exclusively within the individual’s mind:

The employment of “collective memory” can be justified only on a metaphorical level . . . as a general code name for something that is supposedly behind myths, traditions, customs, cults, all of which represent the “spirit,” the “psyche,” of a society, a tribe, a nation. . . . “Nation,” “tribe,” “society” are general names whose sole substance lies in their actual members who share common myths, traditions, beliefs, etc. This is the only sense in which a nation or a tribe can be said to exist, but never as a single, distinct, single organism with a mind, or a will, or a memory of its own.” (35)

At times, however, critics arguing for healing memory appear to lose sight of this distinction.

Ferrán, for example, suggests that the ethos of amnesia of the transition has had measurable effects on Spain’s democracy: that electoral “participation has stagnated” (32). Setting aside the question of accuracy of this thesis – since it may be safely said that the factors determining electoral participation are many and difficult to document – it supposes that Spain will react to an injury as a sick individual might. Trauma, rather than being used as a metaphor in which what happens to an individual might be used to shed

light upon what happens at the collective level by drawing attention to certain similarities, is used rather more literally, as a phenomenon with consistent patterns of causes, symptoms and treatments for individuals and groups. Furthermore, this organic view of Spain, perhaps inadvertently, presupposes a certain model for the nation: a nation that may be pluralistic, heterogeneous, and ideologically divided, but a single nation, defined in part by a common memory of a common trauma. The thinking of peripheral writers and their demand for a reconsideration of national identity poses a challenge to this definition of Spain. As I will propose in the following chapters of this dissertations, writers such as Bernardo Atxaga and Ramon Saizarbitoria not only propose alternative visions of Spain and its history, but also critically explore the ways in which political discourse and memory construct identity.

2

MALA GENTE QUE CAMINA, SOLDADOS DE SALAMINA, AND LA SIMA:
LITERARY INTERSECTIONS WITH THE MEMORY DEBATE

“Politics,” the author resumes, “is a stone attached to the neck of literature, which, in less than six months, drowns its. Politics in the middle of imaginative interests is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert. The noise is deafening without being emphatic. It is not in harmony with the sound of any of the instruments.”

Stendhal
The Red and the Black

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I have outlined the pressures on novels narrating the Civil War. Efforts to re-examine, reinterpret, and redress Franco's rebellion and repression have focused on how these events are symbolically represented. As a privileged mode of representation, the novel carries a valuable potential to further the interpretations of the past called for since the late 1990s by memorialists – those who espouse healing memory as a way to reverse past injustices and improve Spain's democracy.

In the current chapter I analyze three Spanish novels that represent the Civil War and the Francoist legacy: Benjamin Prado's *Mala gente que camina* (2006), Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina* (2001), and José María Merino's *La sima* (2009). Rather than reassert an often-made demand that the novel conform to a specific reinterpretation of the past, I will focus on how these works engage or disengage from the memory debate. I will examine also how these novels problematize the recovery of the past, whether or not they shed light on the difficulties of reconstructing in symbolic language that which is gone. One approach, taken by *Mala gente que camina*, is to represent the past as easily transferable to narration and lay out for the reader the appropriate way to interpret its meaning. I argue, however, that novels can offer richer representations of the exceedingly complex question of what to do with the past, by presenting alternative solutions and gaps in its arguments that stimulate the reader to participate in the search

for answers.

I examine also how the novels address the place of the peripheries in the story of Spain, and how they shape the nation in representing it as a remembering community. Assertions of a differential memory or identity are ignored in *Mala gente que camina*, given little attention in *Soldados de Salamina*, and met with hostility in *La sima*. This range, from indifference to hostility, is typical of the most-read and most-studied novels on the Civil War by Spanish authors outside the peripheries, with indifference being probably the most prevalent attitude.

In the subsequent chapters of this thesis I will focus on novels that do address the memory of the past and narratives of identity formation as they relate to Spain's historic nationalities – the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia – rather than to Spain in general. Because these narrations recall separate sets of events or interpret similar events in a separate light, often rethinking the relationship between the past and contemporary identity, I believe they require a separate space for critical treatment.⁷ The critical approach to exploring literary representations of the memory debate that I propose here may therefore, with some further refinement, serve to examine works in the co-official languages that represent the lingering effects of Francoism. I intend first to contrast strategies of representing nation-defining conflict before considering more narrowly the problems of doing so in the perspective of a differentiated culture.

Though heterogeneous in their tone and structure, *Mala gente*, *Soldados*, and *La sima* share a number of themes and motifs that invite comparison. The most obvious

⁷ This is not to deny that there is much overlap between the Spanish national literary market and public debate over the past and those of the autonomous regions. I recall, as anecdotal evidence, my interview with the Basque novelist Ramon Saizarbitoria while researching this dissertation. Sitting by itself on his coffee table was a copy of the historian Paul Preston's recently published *El holocausto español*, yet another attempt to bring to light and quantify the horrors of the Civil War.

similarity is their common narration and commentary upon the historical trajectory of modern Spain, from the conflict of the 1930s to contemporary times. Set within the current democratic regime, all three feature male protagonists who are writers investigating the past and writing books that blend historiography with fiction. That the novels focus upon their own creation is not remarkable in and of itself, given the frequency of self-referentiality in postmodern literature. However, as examples of “meta-memory texts” (Ferrán 15), that is, texts that include in their plot the process through which history is discovered and written, the three novels bring to the fore the relationship between present-day Spain and its conflicted past. They explore the ways in which the past continues to be accessible or sealed off, how it is converted from documentation into text, and how it may be used once unearthed.

Despite the use of similar narrative structures and metafictional motifs, however, the novels differ widely in their approaches to the past. *Mala gente que camina* displays the faith in the unproblematic recovery of history that Labanyi sees as characteristic of the memory boom. By narrating the unofficial history as told by today’s ethical winners and yesterday’s wartime losers, the novel, like many other contemporary memory works, continues to write against the grain of Francoism, and with the grain of memorialism. On the other end of the spectrum, Javier Cercas’s *Soldados de Salamina* resembles more closely David Herzberger’s prediction for the historical novel, taking advantage of its freedom from the contention of fighting a master discourse on history, at times writing against its grain, other times with it. Ideologically indeterminate, the novel proposes that the losers of the past deserve to be remembered through narration, but also puts on display the faulty mechanisms of such narrations. *La sima* similarly argues that narration,

even by an earnest writer who wishes to accurately represent the past, transforms – often distorts – that which it retells. However, unlike *Soldados*, which touches only briefly on the questions of Spain’s memory debate, *La sima* struggles with them head on, reflecting alongside the reader, but finding few definitive answers.

2.2. Prado’s Combat with Franco

Mala gente que camina, out of any novel written in the last fifteen years, perhaps most unambiguously embraces the memorialistic project of vindicating Francoism’s victims and denouncing its injustices, in this case the forced adoption of the children of the regime’s enemies. Without a doubt, Prado’s novel is committed art or, as Ignacio Soldevila and Javier Lluch put it, “escritura responsable” (36). In interviews, the author has made clear his support for the aims of groups such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica. For example, in an interview on the novel for the *Tribuna Complutense*, Prado denounced the continued existence of mass graves and the impunity of former regime members such as the now-deceased Galician senator Manuel Fraga, the former minister of information and tourism under Franco. He goes so far as to suggest that expressions of apologetic stances toward Francoism ought to be outlawed. Prado affirms, in short, that the alleged “perfección” of the transition in resolving Spain’s conflicted past is “la gran mentira de todas. . . . No de la transición en sí, sino la idea de que en ese periodo todo quedó resuelto, saldado, suturado y perfectamente entregado para la historia y para el futuro” (Fernández 15). In an interview with *El País*, Prado said the novel arose “de una sensación de injusticia” (Ruiz). He reports that upon viewing the documentary *El nens perduts d’el franquisme*, on the forced adoptions of the children of

Republicans, he was compelled to set aside another project in order to retell the troubling episode of Spain's past in fictional form. With the exception of Penpisa Srivoranart's article, which reviews the novel's formal features, academic studies have focused on the *Mala gente*'s ideological commitment. These include Jerelyn Johnson's study of metaphors of sickness and healing in the novel. Soldevila and Lluch, in praising terms, analyze the novel as taking part in the "vuelta de la guerra y la posguerra a través de la literatura," a phenomenon that bears "más compromiso que evasión" (35). Gloria García Urbina similarly describes Prado as a member of the "generación de autores jóvenes que . . . alzan la voz para recordarnos . . . que para superar los trágicos hechos que sacudieron España durante gran parte del siglo XX no basta con volver la espalda y seguir caminando."

While the novel received much publicity in the press upon its publication in 2006, its press reviews were mixed. In a negative review for *El País*'s literary supplement, for example, Javier Goñi writes that from Prado's primary emotion, from "esta santa y legítima indignación no se hace, siempre, una buena novela: y éste es el caso de *Mala gente que camina*." In perhaps the most negative review of all, Ana Rodríguez Fischer, bashes the novel for, among other features, the ineffectiveness of its humor and overabundance of undigested historical data. In the magazine *Clarín*, Carmen Alfonso similarly criticizes Prado's deployment of facts and texts; the novel is saved, however, in her review, thanks to the "oportunidad que Benjamín Prado nos ha brindado de descubrir y aceptar una terrible parte de nuestra Historia . . . un ejercicio que la conciencia agradece." Writing in *El Cultural*, Ricardo Senabre similarly notes "la acumulación excesiva de datos," as well as the author's tendency to evaluate historical figures and

writers according to their left/right affiliation, but affirms that the novel is “bien compuesta y propia de quien considera la literatura algo más que un simple jugueteo verbal o un entretenimiento intrascendente” (Rev. of *Mala Gente*).

My own analysis will expand upon the novel’s emphasis on ideology and its method of recovering the past. I will point out three aspects of the novel that pertain to central questions and discursive strategies involved in writing about the war: First, the novel, unwavering in its programmatic stance, is written, to use Herzberger’s terms, against the grain of Francoism. This requires the carrying over of Francoism and its effects into the novel’s present (circa 2005). Secondly, the investigation that structures the novel proposes that the past is un-problematically recoverable. The truth of the facts, perhaps as far as possible from postmodern un-resolvability, lies in waiting for an investigator willing to unearth it. The process of unearthing, furthermore, entails only recovery rather than reconstruction, and thus avoids the traps of subjectivity or the dangers of imagination commingling with fabrication. Finally, grasping truth in the novel depends less on investigation at all than on the self-granted authority of the narrator character. Options alternative to the author’s understanding, rather than being weighed in dialogue, are simply dismissed as false – if not immoral or, to put it plainly, stupid. Only the narrator, thanks in part to his research, but also in large part to an arbitrary self-empowerment, can speak as possessor of the truth.

As a result of these aspects, the novel contributes little to the debate on memory beyond reiterating, in fictional illustration, the program espoused by the proponents of memorialism. I see the book as a caution against demands that the novel participate in creating a culture of memory. *Mala gente que camina*, which makes many of the common

arguments of memorialism, is in the end an undemocratic novel. Though it defends a version of history that is explicitly at odds with the state version of history under Franco, it replaces one imposed master history with another, proposing a Manichean understanding of the war that leaves no room for dissenting thought.

I will briefly summarize the novel before continuing with my analysis. The first person narrator, whose name (Juan Urbano) is not mentioned until the penultimate line of the book, relays in an extended epistle the results of his investigation into the work and life of a (fictional) novelist named Dolores Serma. The narrator, a high-school teacher with aspirations in academia, is researching Carmen Laforet and her milieu when he stumbles across several references to Serma, who, it turns out, is the grandmother of one of his students. The narrator begins an affair with Natalia Escartín, the married mother of the student and daughter-in-law of Serma. Urbano expects that the book resulting from his research, to be titled *Historia de un tiempo que nunca existió*, will catapult his career. After reading and being impressed by Serma's book, a virtually unknown Kafkaesque fantasy entitled *Óxido*, the narrator decides that he must bring the author's work to light. Serma, appropriately for the book's themes, is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, but Urbano attempts to discover her biography and solve its apparent contradictions, such as the contradiction between the anti-fascist thrust of her novel and her friendship with high-ranking regime figures. Thanks to his reading of published studies of postwar Spain and the documents that Natalia and Serma's son Carlos Lisvano Serma provide him, the narrator ultimately resolves the enigmas behind Serma's life.

As I have noted above, the novel lays bare the author's support for the recovery of memory of the victims of the Civil War, his antipathy to the dictatorship, its ideology, and

its adherents, and his sympathy for their Republican counterparts. The narrator, taking ideological positions similar to Prado's in his interviews, is constantly denouncing the atrocities of the regime and the silence supposedly endorsed in the transition. Many of these denunciations emerge from the narrator's observations or comments on his reading, which include the book version of Montse Armengou, Ricard Belis, and Ricard Vinyes's *Los niños perdidos del franquismo*, and the eugenic pseudo-scientific theories of Antonio Vallejo-Nájera, the director of psychological research for the regime's jails and concentration camps. Vallejo-Nájera, as *Mala gente* details, conceived of Marxism (that is, all forces opposed to the Franco regime) as a mental defect, and advocated removing children of Marxists to save them from "miseria material y moral" (173). According to *Los niños perdidos del franquismo*, as many as twenty-five to thirty thousand children of regime enemies (some of whom had been executed) were "re-educated," that is, given in adoption to families adhering to regime ideology.

The practice, of course, is horrifying by any reasonable standard. Prado, by focusing upon one of the darkest, most indefensible episodes of Franco's regime, finds powerful ammunition against it. Still, the narrator's assertion that "Dicho y hecho, las autoridades franquistas aplicaron con todo el rigor del mundo [Vallejo-Nájera's] tesis" (138), is perhaps a distorting one, given the scale of the atrocities that Nationalist authorities carried out or allowed. Though the Franco regime's abuses cannot be excused, their scale was, against the "todo el rigor del mundo" Prado ascribes, small as measured against the crimes committed in the contemporaneous totalitarian regimes of Hitler or Stalin. Vallejo-Nájera and his ideology, thankfully, were never prominent enough in the regime to lead to atrocities akin to those of the Final Solution.

The pre-war Republic, conversely, is described in the novel in unqualified positive terms. For example, Urbano asserts, “lo que había pretendido la República no era sólo hacer justicia a cientos de miles de labradores que vivían en un mundo regido por códigos medievales . . . sino también adaptar el paso de España al de las principales naciones de Europa” (226-7). The narrator’s assessment of the two sides of the war – “las cosas son sencillísimas: aquí hubo fascistas y demócratas” (248) – stands in contradiction to mainstream historiographical depictions. Histories of the war have documented internal, sometimes bloody, conflict between the bourgeois republicans, anarchists, and communists on the Republican side (see for example Hugh Thomas’s discussion of the “May Days” conflicts in Catalonia). The latter two categories, including revolutionary organizations that perpetrated violence within the Republican territory, would not necessarily be defined as pro-democratic.

If Prado can continue to write against the grain of Francoism, it is because, in his view, Francoism’s consequences remain active thanks to an unsatisfactory transition. The transition to democracy is in the narrator’s reckoning “la descripción de un crimen . . . [U]nos y otros han pactado el olvido; . . . no se ha intentado pasar página, sino arrancarla” (117). The process has managed to “echar tierra encima de demasiadas cosas” (264), including, literally, the bodies still lying in mass graves.

The transition’s consequences are seen in the attitudes of characters such as the narrator’s mother and Carlos Lisvano, who favor leaving the past buried. Urbano’s mother, for whom the narrator expresses admiration, along with an unflagging certainty that she is mistaken, appears to embody the generation of the children of the participants of the war who wish to forget its horrors, chalking them up to fratricidal madness rather

than studying their roots, in the belief that “hay cosas que no deben removerse” (250). Carlos, on the other hand, appears to hold a direct stake in keeping the past buried, for the narrator implies that he is an heir to the privileges forcefully seized by the Spanish right. Following the transition, he has joined “un partido de derechas,” worked in “uno de los despachos más prestigiosos del país,” and held a number of minor political posts (204). Carlos belongs to the “*bando* de los poderosos” (282), “ese *bando*” (204) to which Dolores Serma had also apparently belonged; I emphasize the term *bando*, the most common one in Spanish to apply to the two sides in the Civil War, to stress how Prado applies historical figurations to contemporary Spain.

The lingering effects of Francoism appear in metaphors of poor health, the trope I have described in Chapter 1 as being common in memorialist writing. Prado is among those artists who, as Jerelyn Johnson aptly points out in her essay “Nation Heal Thyself: Illness and Recovery in *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias* and *Mala gente que camina*,” “take the healing metaphor a step further by incorporating illness within their narratives as an allegory for the political situation and level of healing in Spain today” (2). The allegorization of body, nation, and health, occurs, for example, in the novel’s primary subplot in which the narrator answers the calls for help of his ex-wife Virginia, who is undergoing treatment for hepatitis C she has contracted as a result of intravenous drug use. The character, now the owner of a failing macrobiotic restaurant named Demeter, can be read, as Johnson does, in the light of the historical narratives of postwar Spain, as a victim of the *movida*, the post-transition explosion of nightlife, drugs, and sex. Though Virginia has broken her drug addiction, she continues to suffer its consequences, and her business has fallen out of fashion along with the fads of the 1980s on which it

capitalized. In other words, as Johnson points out, she is among those Spaniards for whom democracy has not fulfilled the promise it was supposed to hold out, a symptom of the national health that has yet to be healed. Juan Urbano helps Virginia by lending her money and sending her clients; eventually the restaurant becomes popular, Virginia cures her disease through medical treatment, and the couple rekindles a more subdued version of its original relationship. As Virginia's life is turned around, Urbano's assistance, as Johnson's points out, serves as "metaphor for a curative return to the past" ("Nation Heal Thyself" 8). The restoration of what has been lost, as Johnson also indicates, is not completely possible, but the narrator reaches a satisfactory approximation.

Virginia and Juan Urbano's successful return to their past is echoed in the central episodes of the novel, in which Urbano, in his capacity as an investigator, is able to make a clean recovery of history to positive ends. Though nothing can change Dolores's advanced illness or undo the injustices committed to her and her sister that Urbano discovers, her story remains intact, completely recoverable to somebody willing to overcome obstacles in the way. Tropes of layering, which recur in the novel, indicate that the past is figured not as gone, but covered up, waiting for recovery. Such tropes include figurative burial as in Juan Urbano's above cited complaint that the transition acted to "echar tierra encima de demasiadas cosas" (264). In another example of layering/covering, the narrator, pondering his past with Virginia, concludes "nos volvimos otros como si fuésemos una de esas figuras pintadas encima de otra figura a la que borran y que ya sólo vuelve a ser visible trescientos años después y únicamente si a alguien se le ocurre mirar el lienzo con rayos equis" (268). In other words, time does not really destroy, it merely covers up, and archeological tools can find what has been.

Prado's novel presents the investigation of the past as a restoration of what is still conserved, rather than a reconstruction of fragments, which would imply a greater possibility for inadvertent distortion and imposition of subjective values. Dolores Serma's *Óxido* serves as the book's textual example of how the past is ciphered and deciphered. Here, information is stored, still whole, through burial mechanisms; first, in the hiding of the facts through obscurantist allegory, and secondly, in the literal layering of the carbon-copies of the manuscript Urbano eventually discovers. In the novel, which Urbano summarizes for the reader, a woman named Gloria sets out in a city full of construction sites and trenches to search for her lost son, fruitlessly asking everybody she encounters for his whereabouts. Eventually, Gloria is denounced and arrested by the police, who tell her "usted no tiene ningún hijo, y nunca lo tuvo" (130), and Gloria begins sleeping in the open trenches around the city. Impressed by *Óxido*, the narrator says the book "parecía tener el sello de Kafka" (130). In fact, I would argue that *Óxido* is Kafkaesque only in the superficial sense that it depends on seemingly strange and enigmatic imagery. Milan Kundera once defined term "Kafkan" as "the only common adjective for situations (literary or real) that no other word allows us to grasp, situations to which neither political nor social nor psychological theory gives us any key" (89-90). If Kafka's metaphors mean something that cannot be ciphered in another discourse, *Óxido* begs for a decoding and re-writing of its unequivocal, albeit concealed, meaning. As the narrator quickly concludes, the text is an allegory for a mother's search for a forcibly adopted child in the repressive postwar Spain. Serma's images turn out to be symbols in a code designed to circumvent censorship and protect the author. Interpretative reading in *Mala gente que camina* is not a matter of interaction with the text and generation of potential

meanings. It is, rather, the extraction of a singular, correct meaning from a more or less labyrinthine form. Juan Urbano's question for the text, therefore, is "¿Qué mensaje quería transmitir la parábola del niño desaparecido?" (133).

Ultimately, the type-written manuscript of *Óxido*, which Natalia Escartín provides Juan Urbano, confirms the narrator's conjectures and resolves in detail all the gaps in information the narrator has been seeking. This information is almost literally buried in layers, for the manuscript is typed making three carbon copies. A yellow, middle copy, it turns out, contains extra inserted paragraphs with autobiographical information written in secret by Serma. Here Serma reveals that Carlos is in fact the son of her sister, Julia, who had been jailed upon an uncle's accusation. In this hidden layer she narrates how she finds and recovers Carlos, after a desperate search. The narrator resolves the mystery not through deductive powers, creating a narration of the events based on the evidence, as would Poe's Dupin, but by pressing until he finds complete, written revelations of the truth.

Juan Urbano's interpreting of the novel *Óxido* stands against literary criticism's longstanding injunction against the false dichotomy between form, which adorns, and content, what a text means. As Wolfgang Iser points out, "If a literary text could really be reduced to one particular meaning, it would be the expression of something else. . . . Put in extreme terms this means that the literary text would then be the illustration of this meaning existing outside itself" (5). Urbano's reading is apt, however, because Serma's text can be reduced to something else: a denunciation of terrible events that would have been fatal to reveal directly. What is lost in both *Óxido* and *Mala gente que camina*, because of their emphasis on decrying injustice is the indeterminacy of the literary text,

are the gaps with which the reader must struggle, but that provide an opportunity for the ideation of new meaning. The goal of the novel is to impose its thesis more than to weigh contradictory possibilities. A common and productive re understanding of the narrative text is that, as the Basque novelist Koldo Izaguirre puts it, “La novela es un instrumento de investigación” (Etxeberria 292). Prado however, even while working investigation into the plot of his book, eschews investigation in favor of didactic persuasion.

To be fair, Prado has indicated his intention to model his novel on historical essay, seeing the novel as historiography with privileges. In an interview, Prado refers to himself as an “investigador” rather than “historiador,” because “Los historiadores tienen que fingir ser objetivos, aunque no lo son, pero yo no. . . . Yo no tengo ni las ganas ni la preparación para ser historiador” (Fernández 15). *Mala gente que camina*, in its fictional writing by Juan Urbano, configures itself as closely akin to history, performing the task of bringing the past to light; the fictional form is adapted only out of circumstantial necessity, for, in order to attain documentation from Carlos Lisvano, Urbano must sign a contract agreeing not to disclose its contents without permission. Thus, instead of writing his planned *Historia de un tiempo que nunca existió*, the narrator writes “este otro libro que ustedes están a punto de terminar. La ficción es uno de los . . . únicos territorios en que es posible esconderse de los abogados” (392). If the contract between Prado and Lisvano echoes the “pact of silence” of the transition, serving the conservative Carlos’s desire to not “remove,” Prado offers fiction as a twin brother of historiography with the power to circumvent imposed silence. Taking this analogy a step further, fictional storytelling becomes the solution to the supposed continued silence and forgetting of Spain’s past.

However, in Prado's melding of history and fiction, the narrator, rather than merely exercise a silenced victim's right to tell, mirrors the forging of official state history, by imposing his own authority. As Jordi Gracia puts it, Prado "entrusts the novel's voice to a simple-minded protagonist who is driven by the urge for revenge, thus undermining the novel's aim of analyzing or reflecting on the regime" (248). Rather than offering narration as resistance to a dominant discourse, he forcefully replaces the opposing discourse with his own monological version of truth. One way in which the narrator does so is through erudition, the overabundance of data derived from scholarship, which leads Soldevila and Lluch, in the course of a positive review, to comment "Es cierto que una relectura última del texto antes de la edición hubiera podido suprimir reiteraciones innecesarias de datos" (43).

The narrator's authoritarian self-nomination as the possessor of truth is evident throughout the novel, spilling over into topics other than history. One example is the narrator's frequent digressions into the subtopic of his dietary habits, in which he airs his distaste for food in large quantities, and food that strays from the macrobiotic tenets of Virginia's restaurant. For example, he grants more than half a page to his ex-wife's explanations of the ingredients and principles of her cooking to Carlos Lisvano Serma. Urbano's righteous disdain for others' behavior encompasses seemingly limitless aspects. To name a few examples: vocabulary choices – "¿Han oído lo mismo que yo? Píscolabis. . . . ¿Qué me dicen? ¿No es para matarlo?" (154) – Christmas time consumerism – "los consumidores revuelven, atisban, discuten, pagan . . . hay quien se llevaría a casa a Jack el Destripador, si se lo dejasen a buen precio. Lo que hay que ver" (239) – or the awarding of literary prizes.

The effect of the narrator's misanthropy speaks directly to the novel's proposal that knowledge of the truth is not attained through dialogue, revision, or reflection, but through imposition of authority. We see this proposal, intended by the author or not, in action in Juan Urbano's job as a school teacher, with his confrontational approach to his students and coworkers. He compares teaching certain students to "predicar en el desierto esperando que en los cactus florezcan girasoles" (49). Discipline is achieved through threats and insults; the narrator tells two students who have been harassing Carlos and Natalia's son, "Quizá no os pueda expulsar, porque eso es difícil: ya sabéis que en este país la escolarización es obligatoria, incluso para los que en lugar de tener cerebros sólo tienen sesos, como las vacas. Pero voy a amargaros cada segundo que paséis en el instituto" (62).

The narrator's discussions with his mother on the war and postwar could offer a potential for exchange of ideas and influence, but the potential is not realized. Against Juan's taking of stances and denunciation of past injustices, she opts for a neutrality that sees the war as an inevitable tragedy between two blameworthy sides: "aquí lo que hubo que hacer fue elegir entre Franco y el comunismo . . . los treinta millones de personas que asesinó Stalin, los cincuenta que asesino Mao Tse-tung, el Muro de Berlín, el Archipiélago Gulag" (247). The mother/son relationship is presented as a positive one, and the narrator enjoys their sparring (73). But if dialogue is meant to be an exchange of ideas in which one's own knowledge is in some way shaped by another's, their discussion proves sterile. Juan sees their discussion as a way to "ensayar mis conocimientos" (70). In other words, there is no chance that the narrator will incorporate his mother's point of view. Their last exchange ends with the narrator resolved to continue his effort to educate

her: “[su] opinión no era más que el eco de millones de opiniones iguales, repetidas durante años por los más cínicos y asimiladas . . . yo tenía que seguir luchando por devolverle a mi madre la perspectiva que le robó la dictadura” (354). Then again, if Juan Urbano and his mother fail to find any common ground, perhaps it is because they represent two extremes that are destined to clash: on the one hand, Urbano’s Manicheanism, in which the two sides of the war are either black and white, and, on the other hand, his mother’s in which all participants are equally gray, without regard to their actions.

Tzvetan Todorov, in his discussion of the writing of Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, points out that “Both extremes [are] equally unacceptable” (180). Todorov proposes in place of either extreme Levi’s concept of a “gray zone,” a spectrum that encompasses nearly all the actors in a traumatic period such as the holocaust, including victims and executioners. This conceptualization does not by any means assign blame equally, but allows for the criticism of comprehensible, more forgivable wrongs committed by victims, such as the concentration camp capos or ordinary prisoners who prioritized their own survival over others’. Urbano in effect provides only unacceptable Manichean viewpoints as counterpoints to his own: his mother’s uncritical neutrality or Lisvano’s interested silence. Thus, he offers no acceptable alternative to his own thought.

Faber, Sánchez, and Izquierdo in their article “¿De quién es el poder de contar? A propósito de las polémicas públicas sobre memoria histórica” decry what they describe as an anti-democratic appropriation of the right to interpret and narrate by experts who have been empowered by media outlets and academia. Juan Urbano, the apparent spokesman for Benjamín Prado, in my interpretation acts like one of these experts, claiming to

possess the version of history that is the “única porque es la verdadera y, a su vez, es la verdadera . . . porque así lo confirman los datos y los métodos de la historia profesional” (Faber, Sánchez, and Izquierdo 71). Thus *Mala gente que camina*, if laudable in its goal of bringing to light knowledge of past injustices, and for decrying a convenient neutrality that does not stem from a critical examination of the past, ends up supporting another version of the political authoritarianism it decries.

If silence has previously been imposed upon Spain, Prado proposes imposing one particular vision of the past. Its imposition on Carlos, a far-from-sympathetic character doomed to humiliation, comes as a triumph for the narrator that parallels not only Virginia’s recovery but also Urbano’s sexual conquest of Carlos’s wife. Those who disagree with the narrator’s truth are simply wrong; those who sympathize with the fascist side of the war or postwar are described as subhuman. In one episode of the novel, a man is angered after overhearing the narrator’s discussion of forced adoption under Spanish and Latin American dictatorships. Urbano concludes: “El hombre no desciende del mono: es imposible que algunos provengan de tan arriba” (281). Those who pay tribute to the space in Madrid formerly occupied by a statue of Franco (removed by the Zapatero government) are “Cuatro cretinos” (85). And those who claim that those statues ought to have remain, since they form part of Spanish history, “Se equivocaban,” the narrator states, since

los dictadores no hacen Historia, sólo la deshacen. . . . Ésa es mi opinión, por si les interesa. Y estoy seguro de que la mayor parte de los lectores que me sigan hasta el final de esta novela . . . estarán de acuerdo conmigo. O eso, o es que no tienen corazón. (86)

There is, in summary, little room for discovery in *Mala gente*’s polemical discourse; the narrator/author has determined that any interlocutor who does not agree with his point of

view lacks the full set of human attributes. The narrator/author appears content to excite those who already agree with him and to antagonize, rather than engage, those who do not.

I do not wish to imply by any means that all efforts to recover the Civil War from a left-leaning perspective will inevitably lead down the path of regurgitation of a series of commonplaces and Manichean portrayals. I argue, however, that works reconstructing the Civil War have much to gain by at times going against the grain of memorialism, by leaving room to question whether a neat recovery of the past is possible and always desirable, and to question, in general, whether one side the in debate over memory has everything right.

Mala gente que camina represents an extreme case of a novel adopting the call for restorative memory. The model of criticism that seeks out ways in which novels can thrust obscure episodes of the past into popular awareness will therefore succeed in exposing the novel's most salient features. In my view, however, in part precisely because it so unequivocally adheres to what memorialism demands from a novel, *Mala gente* fails to address the complexities of the questions surrounding the role of the Civil War in present-day Spain. By closely reiterating arguments made in press columns and political rhetoric, and by declaring itself to be akin to historiography, the novel curtails literature's full potential to create new meaning. By presenting the past as lying in waiting to be recovered, intact, the novel does not address the role conjecture plays in organizing information of the past into a narrative. By stamping a single interpretation onto the events of the past, the book forecloses the possibility of a high degree of participation of the reader.

I can add little about the stance *Mala gente* takes on the shape of the country whose history it recreates. With the exception of a mention in passing of the foundation of ETA, among a list of historical events taking place in 1959, there is virtually no mention of subject matter tied specifically to the Spanish peripheries. The novel's action is limited to Madrid and its outskirts, and the irregular adoption of children it describes took place across the peninsula. As I have argued in Chapter 1, the metaphor of national health and illness, with memory as medicine, implies a unitary understanding of Spain. Spain in the novel is an assumed category, divided into *bandos* and generations rather than regions. We must therefore turn elsewhere for literature that considers whether the peripheries experience a differential version of historical memory.

2.3. Cercas's Irresolution

Javier Cercas's hit 2001 novel *Soldados de Salamina* takes up opposite strategies to *Mala gente*'s clean recovery of the past and unequivocal stance on the past's meaning. Having sold over a million copies, according to the figure cited in media reports (for example Rizzi), and having been turned into a film in 2003, the novel has perhaps more than any other work brought the Civil War to the fore in the cultural market. Though thematizing the role of the conflict in contemporary Spain, the book does not explicitly advocate any policy on war memory. While in the final balance it appears to sympathize more with its Republican characters, the book's stances are implied rather than declared, remaining in the end slippery. The facts of the past, rather than waiting, preserved for re-telling, must be reconstructed through an investigation and narratization that transforms them. The novel proposes memory as a means of reviving victims regardless of

allegiance through engaging storytelling, seeking in the past acts of heroism and reconciliation, rather than political values that may serve as examples for the present.

The wide variety of critical approaches to the novel indicates the complexity of its play between fiction and “reality” and its ability to generate multiple readings. Studies of *Soldados de Salamina* have frequently focused on the book’s metafictional re-writing of history, but have disagreed on its significance. Critics such as Alexis Grohmann and José V. Saval have analyzed the book’s formal features, the former interpreting the novel’s rhetoric of digression, the latter seeking the “paralelismos que emergen de los diferentes ejes simétricos creados por el autor” (63). In an often-cited glowing column in *El País*, Mario Vargas Llosa stresses the role of heroism, especially the every-day heroism of Miralles as an anonymous survivor, an “invisible desgraciado.” Carlos Yushimito del Valle expands on the theme, interpreting the book’s project as “[l]a construcción del héroe moderno.”

Other studies emphasize the book’s examination of the exercise of historiography, asserting that the novel scrutinizes, undermines, and supersedes historiographical writing through the use of perspectivist fictional narration. For a number of critics, such as Robert Spires, David Richter, Kathryn Everly, and Sam Amago, the mistrusting of historiography is seen in a generally positive light, as showing some degree of commitment to the inclusion of history’s losers and leading to a truer picture of the past. (It must be noted that some critics, such as Spires, measure Cercas’s ethical commitment against the standard of the so-called Generation X writers – Ray Loriga, Lucía Etxebarria, and José Ángel Mañas – whose works show little direct interest in the past or politics.) Kathryn Everly concludes that the novel proposes that, “as Nietzsche reminds

us, the story in history gives us a critical perspective of past events” (101). Sam Amago draws upon the “New Historicist work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Hans Kellner, and Hayden White, in which the importance of narrative, subjectivity, and multiple perspectives are linked to the representation and interpretation of history” (144) to conclude that the novel, by emphasizing the narrative aspects of historiography, shows that “telling can . . . lead to knowing” (160).

Two of the contributors to Ulrich Winter’s *Lugares de memoria de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo: representaciones literarias y visuales* assert that the novel explores the moment in which active, oral-based memory is re-inscribed as more-or-less permanent, symbolically represented memory. For Mechthild Albert, *Soldados* fixes what Jan and Aleida Assmann term “communicative memory,” that which is kept alive by the participants of historical events, into written or otherwise performed “cultural memory.” As such, it participates in “la actual empresa de ‘hacer memoria,’ que se opone a la ‘amnesia colectiva’ impuesta por la Transición” (27). Claudia Jünke sees the novel as an example of one of Pierre Nora’s “lieux de mémoire,” a site in which the “memoria verdadera” of a disappearing memory community is crystallized into “history” (102). This is not necessarily a positive transformation, as the political significance of the past disappears in places of memory into the less threatening category of the “memoria como patrimonio” of a homogenous community (103).

If the majority of critics see the novel as vindicating forgotten figures, a few put special emphasis on its contribution to bringing healing memory and restoring justice. For Antonio Gómez López-Quñones, *Soldados de Salamina* produces critical memory that may aid in overcoming a traumatic past. Gómez goes so far as to suggest that the

novel contains “una fuerte impronta política, con una decantada intención por hacer justicia poética y política a aquellos que, como el soldado que no ejecutó a Sánchez Mazas, fueron dejados en la cuneta de la memoria histórica española” (119). Similarly, Ofelia Ferrán includes the novel, which she mentions in passing, as one of those that “enact the process of working through memories . . . opening up spaces of memory within dominant discourses bent on closing them,” that use “notebooks and writing utensils, photos and folders, [that] not only serve to rescue stories of past suffering and repression of oblivion, but also allow for those recollections to be passed from one generation to the next” (273). Conversely, some critics have seen the novel as a self-referential exercise that eludes any responsibility to history. Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer has written that, if Spain has far to go in revisiting its past, especially that of its losers, “Cercas no contribuye mucho a esta tarea, y . . . la guerra se reduce, en su libro, a un episodio más bien marginal” (151). Ana Luengo has gone further, saying that the book “trivializa la memoria torturada de los vencidos y la ignora” (253).

Both the critic Jordi Gracia and the author Eduardo Mendoza, however, praise the novel for its emotional distance from the war (Gracia, “Mendoza debe a Cercas”). Gracia sees Cercas’s book as part of an ongoing revision of the Francoist past that benefits from a growing body of new information, the success of the democratic regime, and the passing of time, which have allowed for a less “sectarian and combative spirit” (248). He accurately describes *Soldados* as “a tribute to those who fought in Europe for a democracy that did not reach Spain . . . until many years later, when this gratitude could finally be expressed without automatically discrediting a fascist writer (however great his ideological responsibility for the barbarity unleashed)” (250).

The novel's aesthetic of ambiguity, which Ana María Amar Sánchez analyzes convincingly, may lead to opposite conclusions on its stance vis-à-vis Civil War memory. I would stop well short of Luengo's criticism that the novel trivializes the memory of the war's losers – for the narrator himself sees one of the book's purposes as keeping alive one such figure in Miralles, who is held up as the book's hero. However, it is true that Cercas does not examine the causes of the war, evaluate its ideologies, or overtly take sides. The war, apparently no longer playing an ongoing role in defining Spanish society, is relegated to the backdrop, an excuse for the narrator's investigation into how novels are created and the past is transformed into text. Whether or not Cercas *ought* to show a degree of commitment to the topic he thematizes, I would argue that the distancing of the past represents accurately the relationship with history felt by many Spaniards, since the battles over memory in the press and the parliament are often fought by an elite minority. At any rate, the narrator's journalistic voice, which for the most part repeats others' voices, rather than incorporating them into his own and using them as evidence for his own arguments, avoids the pitfalls of forcefully imposing a singular interpretation of the past and of vicarious identification with victims. Cercas's emotional distance, because it liberates him from the obligation to offer a truer counter-history to past official ones, allows the author to focus on how the past is altered in its reconstruction, how recovering history is not as simple as removing layers of dirt or paper that have covered it over.

The novel does, as I shall point out below, employ some of the tropes that appear in instances of clear-cut memorialism, which may further explain the disagreement over the book's ideological stance. These tropes, however, are employed in a pastiche style, separated out from the committed ideologies that might be associated with them.

Narrated by a journalist/novelist eponymous to the author, *Soldados de Salamina* relates the fictional Cercas's construction of a novel similar to the one the reader holds in his or her hands. In the book, Cercas interviews the novelist Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, who recalls his father's anecdote about his survival through the final days of the Civil War. According to the story, the father, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, a writer and founding member of the Falange, manages to escape unscathed from a mass execution of Nationalist prisoners. After hiding in the woods, he is spotted by a Republican soldier who spares his life, shouting to a comrade, even as he stares at Sánchez Mazas, "¡Por aquí no hay nadie!" (20). Cercas becomes obsessed with the story and, by way of reviving his flagging career as a novelist, decides to write a "relato real" based on the failed execution. A narration fitting the description of the "relato real," which includes both the details of the events themselves and discussion of how the narrator investigates them, comprises the second part of the three-part novel. Cercas, however, finds that the book "no era malo, sino insuficiente. . . . cojo" (144). He thus decides, after being urged onward by the Chilean novelist Roberto Bolaño, to complete the work by locating and interviewing the clement soldier in order to discover why he has spared Sánchez Mazas. The narrator finally tracks down an old friend of Bolaño named Miralles, a former Republican soldier and Allied World War II veteran whom he believes to be the man in question.

The novel's ambivalent stance on the war, as Ana María Amar Sánchez shows in her study, is expressed in an aesthetic of ambiguity that impedes all direct affirmations. As Amar Sánchez points out, political divisions are erased and the enunciations of characters overlapped, making *Soldados de Salamina* "el paradigma del equívoco político

e ideológico” (188). For example, as Amar Sánchez indicates, the title of the novel is borrowed from Rafael Sánchez Mazas himself, who had planned to apply it to a memoir he would write about his encounter with the group of Republican deserters who had sheltered him after the failed execution. This borrowing not only gives a double sense to the title – simultaneously evoking a specific group of characters and sense of temporal distance – but adopts the Falangist ideologue into the book’s palimpsestic authorship. Cercas himself recognizes the discomfort that incorporating a Falangist protagonist portrayed in a somewhat sympathetic light will cause. This discomfort is lampooned in the objection of the narrator’s girlfriend, who is evidently not well versed in history or literature: “¡Mira que ponerse a escribir sobre un facha, con la cantidad de buenísimos escritores rojos que debe de haber por ahí! García Lorca, por ejemplo. Era rojo, ¿no?” (69).

I stop short of calling the narrator’s opinion of Sánchez Mazas neutral, for he offers much evaluation of the ethics and talent of the “rancio caballero” (140), but the reader is hard pressed to determine whether the character is a positive or negative one overall. Opinions on the Falangist are expressed, like many other statements, as Amar Sánchez points out, in affirmations that are instantly doubted. The doubts, furthermore, are often implied rather than being fully formulated. Of Sánchez Mazas’s writing, for example, the narrator opines “fue el mejor de los escritores de la Falange: dejó un puñado de buenos poemas y un puñado de buenas prosas, que es mucho más de lo que casi cualquier escritor puede aspirar a dejar, pero también mucho menos de lo que exigía su talento, que siempre estuvo por encima de su obra” (140). Sánchez Mazas’s writing, praised tepidly, is relativized to his talent, an immeasurable quality, or a quality that could

only be measured by the texts that he creates. As a result, we are not sure whether the narrator means to temper the positive judgment he has offered of Sánchez Mazas's work, criticize the writer for failing to reach his potential, or sincerely praise on a vague basis. In general, Cercas's narrator seems to follow his aesthetic caprice rather than ethical compass. Thus, as Faber points out, he sees Sánchez Mazas as something of an exquisite poet while dismissing Franco as a "militarote gordezuelo, afeminado, incompetente, astuto y conservador" (Cercas 86) who appropriates the Falangists' ideology and charisma.

Ambiguity permeates even the genre of the novel itself, defended playfully and repetitively by the narrator as a "relato real," which is much like a novel, "Sólo que, en vez de ser mentira, todo es verdad" (68). On the extra-diegetic level, the reader is well aware of the literary game being played by Cercas the author, who inserts fictional plots and characters into a narration based on historical events and figures, rendering its information anything but "real." Within the diegesis, the inclusion of the narrator's investigation and reflection on the book undermines the idea that in the book "todo es verdad." The narrator himself in the second part of the book, before relaying the central episode, confesses, "lo que a continuación consigno no es lo que realmente sucedió, sino lo que parece verosímil que sucediera; no ofrezco hechos probados, sino conjeturas razonables" (89).

If the narrator can only make conjectures as to what exactly has happened in the past, it is because the evidence on which he depends for his investigation, in particular narrated testimony, is so unreliable. For example, as Miralles tells the narrator, eyewitness stories on the war cannot be trusted: "la mitad son mentiras involuntarias y la

otra mitad mentiras voluntarias” (177). Memory is described as a filter that transforms, whether out of self-interest through the molding conventions of narration. As an example of narrative form’s influence on factional information, the narrator, observing a filmed account of Sánchez Mazas’s oral testimony of his failed execution, surmises that the Falangist is reciting not what actually happened, “sino lo que recordaba haber contado otras veces” (43).

The novel’s final soliloquy (a single paragraph occupying pages 205-9 that summarizes the novel’s trajectory) is indicative of its double proposition on its referentially – toward the past, and toward itself as text. On the one hand, Cercas (the character) appears confident that his novel will preserve the past. The narrator, who earlier in the novel confesses that his ignorance of the Civil War made it in his mind about as remote of the Persian War’s “batalla de Salamina” (21), at the end sees his writing as combating oblivion: “mientras yo contase su historia Miralles seguiría de algún modo viviendo” (208). However, whether Cercas is accurately preserving the past itself or projecting his own version to satisfy the demands of his novel remains unclear. Miralles not only denies being the soldier who has spared Sánchez Mazas, even if the narrator does not believe this denial, but also fails to answer the narrator’s questions. Asked what might have been going through soldier’s head, Miralles responds “Nada” (203). The reader may fairly wonder whether Sánchez Mazas’s sparing is the act of heroic reconciliation, modestly denied by its author, that the narrator holds it up to be. Perhaps it is simply a meaningless gesture by a tired and indifferent combatant.

What is certain is that Miralles’s story, whether real or imagined by the narrator, serves to perfect the form of Cercas’s literary creation. Thus, the final soliloquy is as

much a celebration of the end of the novelist's writer's block as it is of the rescue of history's losers from oblivion: "Vi mi libro entero y verdadero, mi relato real completo, y supe que ya sólo tenía que escribirlo, pasarlo a limpio porque estaba en mi cabeza desde el principio . . . hasta el final" (209).

The borrowing of tropes of memorialism in *Soldados de Salamina*, in detachment from an unambiguous aim to rehabilitate history's losers, further indicate the author's accent on exploring how narrations tell, rather than on what investigations turn up. An example of such borrowing is Cercas's effort to rescue Sánchez Mazas. In *Mala gente que camina*, in Juan Urbano's discovery of Dolores Serma's biography and novel, we have seen a more typical example of a rescue of a person whose story has been silenced by the dictatorial regime. Cercas's partial vindication of Sánchez Mazas, reverses the ideological affiliation of the rescued figure while proposing that such affiliations may be judged separately from other qualities like the writer's talent. On page 21, the narrator indicates his interest in books written to "vindicar a los escritores falangistas" – that is, works that correspond, from the opposite political spectrum, to the left's political literature of memory. However, the narrator's scattered focus (upon the failed execution, upon the Republicans involved, upon his own research), along with his somewhat critical treatment of the Falangists, steer the book away from rehabilitative biography of regime figures. Furthermore, the narrator argues that the sub-genre of Falangist vindication, when at its best, consists not of political argumentation, but of authors' efforts to "vindicarse a sí mismos como escritores vindicando a un buen escritor. Quiero decir que esa moda surgió . . . de la natural necesidad que todo escritor tiene de inventarse una tradición propia, de un cierto afán de provocación" (22). In other words, Cercas the

narrator – and I would surmise the author – is as interested in how a risky ideological position shapes a book and helps an author’s career as in the validity of the position itself.

In other borrowings from the pro-Republican memory work sub-genre, the novel inverts the political affiliations usually tied to certain motifs. For example, it is a contingent of Nationalists – the Falangist writers – who have been “enterrado aceleradamente” (21) by Spanish society. It is a mass execution of Nationalists, not Republicans soldiers, that is a central episode of the book. This inversion, is however, balanced with the rescuing from obscurity of figures from the Republican side, for whom the novel seems to show the greatest degree of sympathy: Miralles and the “amigos del bosque” (21) who assist Sánchez Mazas. The novel certainly does not veer toward the genre opposite to pro-Republican memorialism – the best-selling conservative historical revisionism by essayist/journalists Pío Moa and César Vidal.

The novelist/narrator’s play with clichés and his self-conscious search for a book threatens to transform the war, rich in novelesque episodes, into a mere mine for material useful to the novelist. It is not surprising that an author would use the dramatic conflict of such importance to Spain’s contemporary identity as a source for plots; indeed, Alberto Reig Tapia, a committed left-leaning historian, has complained that more authors have not done so (41). However, the price for focusing on the war’s literary potential rather than its political implication is the foreclosing of exploration of structural causes for the war or discussion of the responsibility of its actors. As Amar Sánchez, Faber, and many others point out, the book focuses upon the humanity of its characters, upon the heroism involved in sparing an opponent’s life, upon their universal characteristics, rather than political thought or the effect of their actions in furthering their causes.

For Sebastiaan Faber, de-politicization comes at the price of failing to investigate the historical particularities responsible for the war. “The novel’s . . . general message seems to be that, in the end, there is something fundamentally contingent about political positions, and that therefore politics should never trump our sense of shared humanity,” Faber writes (“Revis(it)ing” 149). What is a “laudatory moral stance,” Faber laments, can depoliticize “human existence: It is one step removed from the idea that if it were not for politics, we would all live in harmony” (“Revis(it)ing” 149).

While the question of what degree of commitment is owed to the tragedies of the past upon their fictionalization has no easy answer, Cercas, at least, appears conscious of its demands. The author employs mechanisms of distancing and perspectivism to avoid the self-coronation to authority status by which one seizes the right to pass judgment over past victimization. While doing so, the novel admits that objections may be raised to its approach to history. While the narrator suggests that “todas las guerras están llenas de historias novelescas,” and are thus fair game for transformation into literature, he juxtaposes to his own statement the veteran Miralles’s qualification: “Sólo para quien no las vive. . . . Sólo para quien las cuenta” (198).

Furthermore, the docu-fable format prevents the appropriation of the voices of the victims, since, as a reporter, the narrator listens and repeats rather than speaking for an other. In doing so, and in expressing the consciousness that writers (such as the vindicators of Falangist authors) may use figures of the past for their own advancement, Cercas avoids vicarious identification. In *Hope and Memory*, Todorov points out the ethical risks of using victims of the past for one’s own advantage, arguing that “No moral benefit can accrue from always identifying with the ‘right side’ of history. . . . Morality is

by definition disinterested” (145). Cercas, by declining to side completely with one group or another, eschews identifying himself with the “right side of history” in order to cast himself in the best light.

By holding up an act of reconciliation, whether real or supposed, and trying to explain it – admitting, ultimately, that it cannot – the book seeks inroads into human psychology in war, rather than casting one side in the role of villain or offering a facile neutral blanket blame. Whether *Soldados de Salamina* can lend sufficient depth to the war without attempting to explore its causes or effects is perhaps a question of the reader’s demands. In my view, the novel does succeed at giving sufficient depth to its investigation of how the past can be reconstructed. As I have noted, critics have disagreed over whether *Soldados de Salamina* contributes to a responsible national recollection, or assists in the proper processing of trauma by creating what Ferrán calls “the ‘empathic unsettlement’ that is so vital to the process of working through memory” (275). But criticism on this ground may lose site of the ways in which literature diverges from other types of writing, on what it can offer that history and essay cannot, and of the literary field’s autonomy from other cultural discourses. *Soldados de Salamina* proposes a project that is more literary than political, a project of playing with fictional form and the drama lent by the war. At the same time, it acknowledges but keeps enough distance from the great ethical questions of the conflict to fall into programmatic judgments that might undermine the text’s complexity.

Because it does not directly weigh in on topics such as ethical responsibility for the Civil War, Javier Cercas’s novel, swerves away from the debate over the place of war memory in contemporary Spanish society. Its focus, simply put, lies elsewhere. Its giving

voice to some of history's losers does not lead to an examination of the question of what to do with the surviving fascists monuments or the remains of the dead. The narrator is more interested in keeping alive the memory of the novel's aged heroes on account of their anonymous solitude and of a need to round out the form of his "relato real," than on account of a desire to affirm the values for which the men fought. The novel neither flows with the grain of memorialism nor fights against it, though at times it echoes its language and topoi in its play with narrative form.

Like *Mala gente que camina*, *Soldados de Salamina* says little about the relationship of the peripheries to Spain's national story. Given the book's rich treatment of the historiography and the narration of memory, an engagement with nationalist and anti-nationalist discourse may well have proven fascinating, but it falls outside the novel's scope. The novel does address the topic briefly when the narrator interviews Miquel Aguirre, an amateur historian and secretary for the radical-left nationalist mayor of a small town. During the passage, Aguirre complains "Lo que me jode son esos nacionalistas que todavía andan por ahí intentando vender la pamema de que esto fue una guerra entre castellanos y catalanes, una película de buenos y malos" (30). The rejection of an ideologized and reductive version of history certainly falls in line with the novel's approach to retelling of the war, though the narrator offers no observation in response to Aguirre's statement, leaving it hanging as a stray thought. Similarly, Aguirre's discussion of his adhesion to separatism, as a practical goal, and his rejection of nationalism as a faith beyond discussion, is left without further development.

In a column in *El País* analyzing what he calls the "fracaso" of the Socialist party in Catalonia due to its attempts to attract nationalist voters, Javier Cercas fleshes out his

position on Catalan autonomy, touching on the role of cultural memory and history in the process. It appears that Aguirre speaks at least in part for Cercas, for in the column the author redraws the distinction between “independentismo” (as supporting political sovereignty, which he himself would not favor) and “nacionalismo” as a dogma and anti-liberal belief (“El fracaso de la izquierda”). As the sub-headline of the column declares, Cercas argues that, “Catalanista o españolista, el nacionalismo es reaccionario.” Catalan nationalism’s legitimating force, he argues, derives from a now obsolete discourse of resistance to Franco, to the erroneous belief that local nationalisms, in antagonism to the regime’s, must be positive, and that, because they oppose a centralist, conservative nationalism, peripheral nationalisms are or can be left-leaning. Cercas concludes the column by criticizing the “industria boyante” of both Catalan nationalism and anti-Catalan nationalism, and calling for a separation of linguistic policy from nationalistic debate.

I would dispute Cercas’s assertion that nationalism is by definition a reactionary ideology, though I grant that a newspaper column may not afford the space for the author to define just what he means by nationalism, a wide-open term that is used with various meanings. André Lecours points out that the term nationalism is usually understood to include two subsets. The first is ethnic nationalism, often understood as exclusive, race based, and traditionalist – and, by many thinkers, as “bad.” The second is the civic nationalism born from the French Revolution, in which egalitarian legal codes, rather than race, defines the community, understood to be inclusive, progressive and “good.” Cercas appears to be speaking of the former variety. But Lecours convincingly argues that nationalist movements combine a continuum, in varying proportions, of both ethnic

and civic varieties. He further argues that western nationalist movements have, since their origins, steered away from exclusivity ethnic nationalism toward civic nationalism (though Cercas might disagree with Lecours's analysis of Catalan, along with Scottish, nationalism as being civic in nature from their origins).

I would also call for further refinement of nationalism as an active political program versus what Michael Billig calls every-day or "banal nationalism." The often unconscious reminders of national belonging that Billig identifies shape (perhaps imperceptibly) one's cultural outlook. A nationalist – or at least nationalized – sense of identity in this perspective can be considered universal among the population of western states.

In any case, in *Soldados*, Cercas's play with narratives of memory does not extend into the competing narratives of identity he discusses in the column. The absence of a more-in-depth exploration of a differential memory is perhaps more surprising than it is for *Mala gente* given that the novel takes place almost entirely in Catalonia. The central episode that Cercas seeks to reconstruct, Sánchez Mazas's escape, sparing, and hiding, takes place in rural mountainous area of the province of Girona, between small towns and *masias*. Yet, while the prevalence of Catalan names and toponyms locates the novel clearly in the Catalan geography, there are few or no mentions of Catalan history, or of the Catalan language that many of the characters must have spoken.

After all, it is essentially by chance that Sánchez Mazas, who is captured in Barcelona while attempting to flee Spain after a long period of hiding in Madrid, ends up in the mountains of Catalonia. I will recall here that Cercas the narrator, in the newspaper article he inserts into the novel, hints obliquely that the ideological position of the

Machado brothers may have been determined by the respective side of the battle lines in which they were trapped at the outset of the war. Rather than root his characters in the fabric of a particular place, Cercas allows the random contingencies of war to situate them geographically (and perhaps ideologically) within the great stage that forms the setting of his story. The poem by Jaime Gil de Biedma that Cercas cites in the novel identifies that stage and story. It states: “‘De todas las historias de la Historia . . . sin duda la más triste es la de España, / porque termina mal.’” (26). Geographical specificity within this story of Spain is treated as irrelevant.

2.4. *La sima*: Cenotaph as Monument to Uncertainty

I have described novels that represent opposite ideal types: *Mala gente que camina* is ideologically committed and Manichean while *Soldados de Salamina* bears no commitment but avoids simplistic judgment (neither dividing the world into black or white nor offering blanket condemnation). What of an option in between these ideal types: a novel that engages the debate over memory but is still able to avoid Manichean simplification? Can the novel critically examine the place of Spain's past in its present, rather than turn its back on history, without vicarious identification with one set of actors, without falling into a pre-made discourse?

José María Merino's *La sima* represents such an attempt. Though it sacrifices the mass appeal that Cercas achieves in his blending of war adventure and metafiction, the novel carefully examines, through the narrator's reflection and dialogues, the central questions of the Civil War's origins and how one might remember its victims and gain some lessons from past horrors.

The novel parts with *Soldados* by subsuming methods of historiographical analysis, and by privileging a search for an explanation of Civil War over narrative virtuosity. *La sima* is explicitly, as the last line winks to the reader “Una novela de tesis” (414) that is, both a novel reflecting on the process of writing a doctoral thesis, which is the primary plot episode of the book, and one designed to essayistically prove the author/narrator’s thesis. This thesis is that the Spanish Civil War, as well as other historical conflicts, from the bloody clashes between conquistadors, to ETA terrorism, was a product of a Spanish culture of conflict, a national characteristic that gives its people a propensity for particularly cruel violence⁸. The narrator repeatedly reiterates and gives evidence to support this thesis, describing the Spanish characteristic as “la vibración del odio, esa sustancia que compone tanta porción de lo que somos los humanos y en especial los españoles” (75), “una maldición” (79), “caínismo” (106), “el enfrentamiento belicoso . . . presente entre los ciudadanos casi como una forma de vida . . . en una señal clara y perversa de la colectividad” (238), “el estilo fraticida español” (207), “esa confrontación española” (387). Blaming the Civil War on fratricidal madness or “caínismo” is not a new idea, and in fact, as noted in Chapter 1, has been considered as a common stance among the generation following that of the wars’ participants. It is, though, an unusual stance in contemporary literature given the ideological tenure of many novels and of the debate over memory.

The book was received well in press reviews. Iñaki Ezkerra, in an especially laudatory review, calls *La sima* “‘la gran novela sobre la Guerra Civil española que estábamos necesitando’ en la que el odio cede la palabra a la compasión y a la verdadera

8 Merino’s comments on the book (Ojeda) and his dedication of the book to “A los partidarios de la concordia civil,” indicate the agreement between his own and his narrator’s thoughts on the war.

memoria . . . he aquí una novela original que aborda la cuestión como por primera vez, con una frescura insólita.” Reviewers for *El País’s Babelia* and *El Mundo’s El Cultural* situate the novel within Merino’s investigation of the relationship between the past and identity, although they coincide in asserting that *La sima* gives too much weight to contemporary events and politics, with the risk, according to Ayala-Dip, of downgrading the work from novel to “crónica.” To my knowledge, the novel has not yet been treated in any academic article-length studies. The most in-depth study to date has been Norma Sturniolo’s article in the cultural magazine *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, which analyzes the novel’s proposal of “la supremacía de la ficción” as a tool to investigate historical and psychoanalytical matters (140).

I will focus here on the conciliatory stance Ezkerra identifies and the novel’s conciliatory structure, which constructs symbols, narrations, and even characters as spanning multiple points of view and ideological affiliations. While remaining an accessible text to the reader, *La sima* stresses the complexities of the questions it probes, representing the impediments to recovering the past, the impossibility of completely knowing it, and the difficulty of knowing how to act upon what is uncovered. Merino’s primary strategy is to configure the narration as a confluence of genres and discourses, told to multiple interlocutors (a thesis advisor, a therapist, a former teacher) by a singular narrator but one who switches discursive positions depending on the addressee. The novel suggests that one epistemological system, much less one view point, will be insufficient for sorting out what ought to be Spain’s relationship with its past. Rather than trying to hammer through a point with assertions and supporting dates and data (though these are included), the book adapts contradicting views and points out the weakness in

its own arguments. Whereas the very relevance of the Civil War in determining contemporary society is implicitly stressed in memorialistic discourse, *La sima*, without denying the war's importance, deploys a triple chronology that situates history within one of multiple narrower and broader times that have greater or equal importance in molding the biography of the individual and the course of the world.

The novel's structure incorporate the voices of a range of Spaniards rather than those of one side, much as the narrator himself, though more sympathetic to the Republic's politics, represents a genetic amalgam of the war's *bandos*. Even the central motif of the book – the *sima* of the title – incorporates multiple meanings, rather than a singular imposed one, from the depression the narrator suffers, to the sinkhole thought to hold the bodies of civil war victims. In the end, the symbol, in its physical embodiment, is left literally closed but figuratively open as a place of memory. Its exact nature and contents left unresolved, the *sima* stands as a symbol not clamoring against injustice or calling for their undoing, but calling for reflection that may lead to reconciliation.

The novel consists of a journal written by the 34-year-old protagonist Fidel, a history student who returns to his hometown a week ahead of a planned excavation of the “sima de Montiecho,” a hilltop sinkhole thought to contain the disposed-of remains of executed Republicans. Fidel, whose attempt to write a doctoral dissertation on the First Carlist War has stalled, takes his psychiatrist's advice to write an informal reflection in order to clarify his ideas. A number of factors contribute to Fidel's writer's block; having lost his parents in childhood and been raised among his cousins, and having survived a kidnapping and near execution on a trip to Peru, Fidel finds himself in a “sima” of depression. Furthermore, he struggles to develop his thesis – that Spanish *caínismo* has

caused the Carlist War and other Spanish conflicts – within the confines of a history dissertation.

Fidel's journal chronicles the handful of days that form the novel's present – December 28, 2005 to January 6, 2006 – during which Fidel writes, re-encounters figures from his childhood, and meets the activists and specialists planning the exploration of the *sima*. The narrator's stay spans two important plot events; the first is his reunion with cousin Puri and the rekindling of their relationship. The second is the bombing of the opening to the *sima*, presumably at the hands of the narrator's cousin, Puri's brother José Antonio, who fiercely opposes the proposed exhumations. The journal also includes long passages in which Fidel recounts both his childhood in the town and the events of his adulthood, reviews sources and data he is using in his thesis, and recounts formative dialogues with his friends and teachers on Spanish history and politics.

For the narrator Fidel, *caínismo* refers not only to the metaphorical Spanish family but to the rancorous divisions within his own ancestry. Unlike Juan Urbano, who allies himself with one side of the war, or the fictional Javier Cercas, who distances himself from the ideology of either, Fidel owes loyalty to combatants on both sides. Fidel's father, who has died in a car accident, belonged to a postwar clandestine Communist organization. Fidel, in the journal, recounts his reminders: “no te olvides nunca de que nosotros somos rojos, hijo, defendemos el socialismo, a los pobres, luchamos contra la desigualdad, la explotación y la miseria” (53). Among the *rojos* in the paternal bloodline is Fidel's great uncle, who belonged to a para-military group called “los Solidarios,” participated in the assassination of a cardinal, and was executed during the war, his body being dumped in a roadside ditch.

Conversely, Fidel's maternal family, which raises him after his parents' death, belongs to an affluent, conservative and religious milieu. In their weekly communal prayers, the family elders recall the brother of Fidel's maternal grandfather, a priest who was assassinated during the war and whom the family holds up as a martyr who may one day be beatified. Fidel's maternal grandfather, one of the book's central characters, is a former high-ranking official on the Nationalist side of the Civil War. It is he, according to rumors circulating through the town, who is responsible for executing Republican enemies and disposing of their bodies in the *sima*. (The grandfather denies the charge in ambiguous terms, telling Fidel, "Claro que maté gente, en las guerras las armas están cargadas con balas, Fidel, no son de juguete. Pero eso de la sima, a la gente le gusta hablar y hablar" [56].) The book never suggests that members of Fidel's family combated each directly, but does represent the two branches as enemies having taken part in opposing actions, holding grudges against each other as a result.

The legacy of family division remains intact in the conflict between Fidel and José Antonio, the oldest of the three cousins with whom the narrator is raised. Their rivalry may be read as an allegory for the continued battles between left and right in Spain. It is never resolved in the novel, for Merino declines to offer final, facile solutions to the rifts in Spanish society.

José Antonio, who displays all of the zeal but none of the intellectual ability of the Falangist founder whose name he shares, represents the inheritance of a crass version of his family's ideology. At one point in the novel he successfully bribes his sister Puri's boyfriend to abandon her because he objects to his African origin. Fidel's sexual relationship with Puri, which begins in their teenage years before being abruptly cut off

by the maternal family when Puri becomes pregnant, represents the flip side of *caínismo*. It is a taboo – though the narrator points out that the two legally could marry – that unites rather than divides. The taboo is thus an alternative weapon against Spain’s division, one that depends on transgressive metaphor, in contrasts with the novel’s usual advocacy of dialogue and reflection. Still, the incestuous relationship leads to further *caínismo*; José Antonio attempts to murder Fidel, who is saved, in an apparently symbolic motif, when the would-be assassin’s bullets become lodged in the books he is carrying. Though the grandfather attempts to disinherit Fidel, family ties remain an inheritance that cannot be severed; Fidel retains sympathies for his grandfather despite their break and, furthermore, wins a lawsuit that nullifies the disinheritance.

The causes and solutions of strife within the political Spanish national family is the novel’s most frequent theme. It is explored in a discourse more akin to historical essay or newspaper column than to narrative. Though at times this discourse seems out of place in a novel, it allows the author to dialogically contrast multiple viewpoints rather than prove one of them. Fidel’s group of childhood friends, its members united by their status as outcasts, reads as an allegory of political stances: Covi as the Catholic conservative, Nacho as the revolutionary libertine, Fidel as the moderate “socialdemócrata” (123), and Vici as the apolitical hedonist who falls prey to a drug addiction. As Eduardo Larequi puts it in the course of a positive review in his literary blog, “los abundantes debates sobre temas políticos que contiene la novela se encarnan en figuras cuya adscripción a bloques ideológicos claramente definidos les otorga poca libertad, escaso margen de maniobra como criaturas novelísticas.” There is perhaps some heavy-handedness in the exchanges of paragraph-long chunks of political essay,

especially when put in the mouths of the narrator's teenage friends. But such is the tradeoff for the novel's ability to present clashing viewpoints in a sympathetic light.

The book goes so far as to include direct challenges to its/Merino's/the narrator's belief in a particularly Spanish *caínismo*. Fidel's arguments are countered, repeatedly and convincingly, by his thesis advisor, doctor Verástegui, and his friend Marcos, one of the characters whose political ideology most closely matches Fidel's. In one case, for example, Marcos points out other conflicts that exhibit "caínismo" and that have their roots not in national character but in social conditions:

Es pueril pensar que somos nosotros, los españoles, quienes tenemos la exclusiva del enfrentamiento fratricida. Todavía en los crímenes balcánicos entran elementos étnicos y religiosos, y a pesar de todo ha sido una guerra entre vecinos de casas y de calle, como el que dice, pero en Chile o en Argentina se ha visto claro que era la pura defensa de los privilegios de unos cuantos frente a la necesaria democratización. (140)

Verástegui clashes with Fidel over objections similar to Marcos's, and over the epistemological limitations of historiographical investigations. For Verástegui, the academic historian, Fidel's work falls outside the scope of history:

[Las] discrepancias violentas están en todas las culturas; guerras de sucesión dinástica hubo en Inglaterra, en Polonia. . . . Usted quiere que la Inquisición sirva de nutriente a una supuesta desconfianza continua, al permanente rencor entre los españoles. Usted quiere enlazar algunos enfrentamientos entre conquistadores con la sublevación catalana del siglo XVII, y la guerra de sucesión que estalla tras la muerte de Carlos II con las guerras del siglo XIX, y esta con la Guerra Civil, nada menos. . . . Usted quiere que todo ello esté adobado por un continuo aborrecimiento fratricida. . . . Pero una tesis debe ser ante todo un artefacto científico, datos seguros, hechos contrastados, cifras exactas. La Historia con mayúsculas no puede construirse de otro modo, aquí no valen intuiciones más o menos psicosociológicas. (226-7)

Later, the thesis advisor reiterates:

No me venga usted con la confrontación como especie de fatum histórico inevitable, como propia del genio maléfico español. . . . Si quiere usted

hacer ese planteamiento . . . le aconsejo . . . que escriba una novela, pero que no pretenda llamar a eso tesis doctoral. (358)

Fidel never does respond convincingly to the first line of objection; if historiography has at its means methods to prove a particular war or a particular culture more fratricidal than another, the narrator does not truly attempt to employ them. By including the rebuttal to his own arguments, expressed so forcefully, and with no counter-rebuttal, Fidel, in this novel aimed at reconciliation, renders his own thesis a timid one. He openly grants that he may be mistaken, that opinions opposite to his own merit consideration.

As for the second objection, that research within the discipline of scientific historiography cannot address Fidel's question, the narrator concedes the point. *La sima* responds to it by proposing that any single discourse is too limited to interpret the meanings of the past. Fidel takes Verástegui's advice literally, offering his journal/reflection on history as his "novela de tesis." Fidel's appropriation of the novel is quite different than Juan Urbano's, which grants the novel similar function to the historiographical monograph, but with added legal protection. In *La sima*, the narrator seeks complimentary modes of knowledge; he admits that his point of view depends on "intuiciones" (202) that cannot necessarily be proven in academic discourse, whether through the abundance of data or the authority of his voice.

At one point, in a deep depression following his kidnapping in Peru, Fidel suffers a crisis of all forms of knowledge; reading the seventeenth-century historian Juan de Mariana, and noting his inclusion of data from the Old Testament in his writing, the narrator begins to doubt the distinction between scientific history and legend in which his colleagues so firmly believe. He starts to wonder if "la historia era . . . un conjunto de fábulas manipuladas sucesivamente para organizar una mentira convincente" (308).

The venture into non-historiographical writing offers Fidel a way out of the *sima* of depression and writer's block, a venue for proposing ideas that cannot be focused upon in a history book. Fidel's text, prescribed by doctora Valverde as a break from "el trabajo académico," successfully acts as "escritura terapéutica" (307). Apart from its healing value, fictional writing, *La sima* suggests, offers alternative modes of investigating the real. Spurred by a friend's conviction "que las novelas servían para entender mejor la realidad" (307), Fidel reads Galdós's *Episodios nacionales*, that is, fictional renderings upon the same material he studies scientifically. Then, within his therapeutic journal, Fidel begins to write fiction himself, inserting a fictional episode into the journal.

Fiction writing allows Fidel to explore the psychological motivations and potential for Cainistic violence innate to all humans, as experienced by José Antonio, Puri, and himself. The universal potential for participation in atrocity is an example of a topic better suited for literature than for historiography. In the brief fiction written into the journal, José Antonio, hunting gun in hand, marches Fidel to the *sima* de Montiecho with the intention of killing him, before being shot dead himself by Fidel and Puri in the ensuing struggle. The exercise forces Fidel to imagine – and to an extent sympathize with – the inner workings of José Antonio, who is without a doubt the book's least sympathetic character. As he writes in his journal, in order to make the dramatic scene realistic, Fidel empathetically imagines José Antonio's self-justifications: his anger at the accusations against his grandfather, Fidel's corruption of Puri. Similarly, in order to depict himself murdering José Antonio in a scene that is "verosímil" (392), Fidel must draw not only on historical descriptions of violence, or that which he has witnessed in Peru, but also examine his hatred for José Antonio, his smoldering anger over childhood bullying, the

impact of using insults he would never dare speak outside a fictional setting. The fictional episode within the journal does not necessarily offer a lesson on how to avoid violence (though it does confine it to the realm of art), but allows Fidel to conclude that the imagined scene could in fact take place, that his hypothesis on Spanish violence “no era tan absurda” (397). All the while, Fidel admits the limitations of writing in his limited, singular perspective. For example, after writing the novel episode on José Antonio, and reflecting upon what he has written, he laments, “en estas aclaraciones más José Antonio aparece como una pieza, un tipo sin matices” (402). Writing then is not the format for exposing definitive truths, as in *Mala gente*, but rather the effort to overcome its own limitations.

The hybridity of genre (essay, chronicle, journal, novel), designed to supersede any single genre, echoes the multiplicity of its implied recipients. Fidel addresses three interlocutors who represent three modes of understanding humanity: his psychiatrist doctora Valverde, his thesis advisor Dr. Verástegui, and don Cándido, the former school teacher who has influenced Fidel’s intellectual development, steering him to the moderate political stance and to the universalist, at times non-scientific, approach to history he favors. In addressing three interlocutors, the narrator takes up varying discursive positions: as a student in need of guidance, a patient in need of therapy, a partner in conversation. In this hybridity, the narrator finds a way to multiply his own voice and the meaning of his text, by implying that it serves several purposes and will have different effects on different readers.

While the novel dedicates much of its space to the Spanish historical past, its dependence on at least three chronological axes contextualizes historical time rather than

giving it the inflated emphasis it acquires in writing focused narrowly on the war. The book is organized, first of all, on what I will call a journal chronology based on the handful of days Fidel's journal intensely documents. Within this time fall the moments of what Unamuno called "*intra-historia*," that which is lived day-to-day by an individual, and is left out of the narrative of history (33-4). Secondly, the book chronicles historical time; the sequence of events thought to be of transcendent importance. This is the time Fidel reconstructs through a combination of sources: history texts, conversation, oral testimony, and discovered physical traces such as his grandfather's hidden Falangist accoutrements. Finally, the book refers several times to "tiempo no humano" – time on a geological scale, often perceived in contemplation of sublime mountain vistas.

The overlap of chronologies causes two important effects: this first is to contextualize history as just one scale within others that bear equal importance. Merino willingly admits that intra-historical events – Puri and Fidel's affair, Fidel's parents' car accident – can mark the individual more than a Civil War battle. A desire to analyze history does not translate into an inflation of its place in determining an individual's life or Spanish society. Cosmic time, similarly, renders actions on any of the human time scales as less significant, leading the narrator to the realization "que el planeta no te necesita, que eres un intruso, algo pasajero y superfluo" (286).

The second effect of the novel's overlapping chronologies is to emphasize the challenges of transferring historical events and temporal processes into narration, as Fidel's real-time self-critiques of the text he is producing remind the reader. One such challenge is the weakness of memory, which Paul Ricoeur calls the surest means to "guarantee that something has taken place before we call to mind a memory of it" (7).

Fidel, alternating the narrative thread between biographical time and the journal time of the novel's present during his reflections on the text he is writing, and noticing that he has in his writing confused the duration of his childhood stay in José Antonio's bedroom, comes to the realization "que haber puesto por escrito algunos sucesos me permite advertir que no se produjeron tal como los he reflejado, aunque sin embargo era como creía recordarlos" (45). Similarly, after narrating the revelation of his grandfather's actions in the war, he admits "Tampoco lo que sucedió cuando llegamos delante de la sima fue tal como lo he escrito. . . . los niños hicieron aquellos comentarios, pero en el momento en que Fausti acusó a mi abuelo de los crímenes . . . yo no contesté nada. . . . sólo más tarde, ya en casa, llegué a concordar todo lo que allí se había contado" (48-9).

Narration in the novel serves to organize one's thoughts but it also imposes its own logic; in the cases I have just cited the need for condensation alters what has taken place. Even the narrator's correcting of the first narration of his discovery of his grandfather's supposed crimes, his "recapitulación," fails to fully clarify the past, for it too is filled with "extrañeza" (66). The impression of the past remains a "potaje" difficult to transpose through "memoria" (66).

The failed exploration of the sima de Montiecho further illustrates the barriers between the past and the present. Toward the end of the novel, the bombs of a saboteur – most likely José Antonio – close the opening to the *sima*, making its exploration impossible, perhaps sealing off forever the full story of the atrocities that took place in the town during the war. While the act of sabotage deals a psychological blow to the activists, as apparently intended, the book does not present it simply as a victory by the right over the left in keeping the past buried. For, it was never clear that the exploration

of the sinkhole would have served its intended purpose. Fidel has had doubts all along as to the veracity of the stories about bodies being hurled into the *sima*, not only because of his grandfather's denial, but because of its impracticality: "era más fácil matar a la gente sin necesidad de hacer toda esa ascensión monte arriba, tan penosa para las víctimas como para los verdugos" (338). The sealing off of the *sima* suggests that a recovery of the past is not as simple as pro-Republican memorialists like the book's activists would have it; the bodies of the dead cannot always be recovered, and the truth over where the dead are buried may never come to light.

The novel thus seems to take an ambivalent stance upon the exhumations of mass graves, which after all have failed to garner consensus in Spain. While Fidel supports them, the novel suggests that dialogue and reflection, which help Fidel emerge from his personal "sima de pesadumbre" (313) may ultimately be more effective in bringing Spain out from the *sima* of conflict. The *sima*, unexplored, perhaps remains a more powerful symbol of the war, as a sort of tomb of unknown Spanish soldiers. Had the cavern been proven empty, it would have lost all its evocative force; had bodies been recovered, it would have meant the restoration of dignity of victims, but also risked the alienation of many Spaniards. More importantly, it would have meant the desacralization of the *sima* as either a tomb or cenotaph; at the book's end, there remains a monument to the war and a site of potentially productive memory.

Benedict Anderson points out that "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. . . . [P]ublic ceremonial reverence [is] accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them" (9). José María Merino

formulates the *sima* as symbol of national identity, in which nameless, possibly absent, Republicans stand in for the victims of *caínismo*. The still-surviving symbols call for action toward resolution of that conflict.

In my view *La sima* fails to explore the multiple possibilities of the place of the peripheries in the Spanish nation, a topic it touches upon occasionally. To formulate a Spanish national story based on a dialogue that weighs options, *La sima* must depend, obviously, on sort of some understanding of the Spanish nation. It does so without ever stopping to define what a nation or Spain is.

While the book counterweighs and validates opposing right/left political ideologies and their interpretations of the past, seeking common ground, it does not afford such generosity to alternative understandings of national identity. If one extrapolates from the comments of Fidel and the moderate characters with which he shares ideological kinship (don Cándido and Marcos), *La sima* holds forth a unitary model of Spain. Don Cándido, Fidel's mentor figure, proposes a form of civic Spanish nationalism by praising the consensus reached in the 1978 constitution and attacking those who would contest its terms (174-5). The novel implies also an essentialist ethno-nationalism by seeking to define the Spanish national character as a violent one. Though critical of Spain rather than chauvinistic, the book projects Spanish identity into the nether eras of prehistory and forecloses the existence of other ethnic identities within the Spanish nation.

Let us consider how the narrator applies observations on "los españoles," assuming that all share in a national character: "Tal vez entre los españoles . . . el problema estribe en que no estamos dispuestos a ver el adversario como persona . . ."

(402-3). “Los españoles tendemos al radicalismo . . .” (404). Spanish *caínismo*, the narrator suggests at one moment, may stretch back far beyond the events that could be linked to the formation of the current nation state, beyond the invasions of the Goths and Moors or the *reconquista*. For, the narrator sees “claves propias” of the culture of conflict in civil wars between Roman generals, in the alliances into different factions formed between Basques and Celtiberians (299). At one point he goes so far as to wonder, “Quién sabe si la sima de Atapuerca [the region famous for its deposits of prehistoric bones and artifacts] no alberga los cadáveres de los asesinados en otra protoguerra civil, un enfrentamiento sanginario entre los miembros de una misma tribu” (26).

Can the reader take seriously Fidel’s extension of a primordial Spanish identity into a period prior to the establishment of the *homo sapiens* species, long before the existence of anything resembling Spain or the nation in general, existed? Or his belief in an essential (violent) national character? After all, *La sima* constantly checks its own authority; Fidel himself seems unsure whether his thesis on *caínismo* constitutes “mi obsesión, o mi delirio, o mi certero sentido de las cosas” (300). Perhaps the reader must keep in mind Merino’s series of winks and consider the statement on Atapuerca a *reductio ad absurdum* that provides ammunition to the characters who disagree with Fidel. And yet, on the question of identity, Merino provides no alternatives to conceiving of the Basques and Celtiberians of Roman Hispania as part of the same culture and ethnicity, which is to say as proto-Spaniards, long before those groups could possibly have imagined such conceptions.

The question of Spain’s subnationalisms, which recurs occasionally in the novel, is subsumed within the national propensity for hatred of one’s brothers. Again seeking the

middle ground, the narrator blames not the Basque Country or central government for ETA violence, but Cainistic hatred: “Los atentados etarras, los delirios nacionalistas, la exaltación antinacionalista” (77). However, the possibility that Basques, Catalans or Galicians could be other than Spanish, or simultaneously Spanish and something else, is never given any consideration. For don Cándido, who reacts with anger to news of ETA assassinations, nationalism, presented as a singular block, without considering the range of positions and points of emphasis, signifies the ethnic snobbery and selfish desire for privilege: “los nacionalistas quieren que los demás seamos plurales pero ellos sólo anhelan su singularidad, la de los demás la desprecian, sólo creen en la propia . . . una singularidad marcada por el privilegio” (325). For Fidel, “los delirios nacionalistas” fall into a long list of symptoms of “el virus o el demonio de la confrontación hispánica,” amounting to “pura repulsa del hermano” (407). The notion that Basques, Catalans, and Galicians are cultural and national brothers the same as all other Spaniards, precludes at the outset the self-definition of a portion of those populations, invalidating even peaceful, democratic defenses of a local culture or right to autonomy based on local conditions and history. On this one point, a novel of memory that so ardently seeks a middle ground calls not for compromise but for the total surrendering of particularistic viewpoints.

Like *Male gente que camina* and *Soldados de Salamina*, *La sima* does not consider the possibility of separate memories of modern Spain’s foundation by separate memory communities. Though their interpretations of the Civil War and its aftereffects, and how these are remembered, contrast sharply, all three suppose a unitary memory community, and a mode of story-telling that may apply across the country. In *Mala gente*, Spain is the site of battle for justice between two halves conceived of in Manichean

terms. The novel applies to fiction a memorialistic discourse in which the past may be recovered easily and attention to victims serves to combat an official view of history inherited from Francoism and replace it with a new narrative of history.

For *Soldados*, the meaning of the war is not so important as rescuing the tenuous, conjecture-plagued memory of individuals: that of a fine Falangist writer, or of a soldier whose heroic act of forgiveness may prove that “La historia de España” does not finish so badly after all. The novel seeks not to overturn historiographical accounts of Spain but instead to mine the past for novelesque material, and the leading political discourse of memory for narrative motifs. *La sima* does search sincerely for the meaning of the war, admitting the great complexity of the question, and settling on an essentialist view of national character as the most likely answer. Much like *Soldados de Salamina*, the novel neither goes with or against the grain of either Francoist historiography or the new discourse of memory. It tests the genres of history, fiction, and political polemic, advancing them as far as possible and demarcating their limits, adapting the novel as a hybrid mode of writing that spans battle lines.

3

ALTERNATE MEMORIES

. . . también los que no somos grandes tenemos algo que decir.

Ramon Saizarbitoria
in *Cinco escritores vascos*

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analyzed how Spanish novels promote, play with, or scrutinize the call for a victim's memory of the Civil War and the epistemology of time and understanding of the Spanish nation that such calls often presuppose. In the chapters that follow, I examine culture and literature of the periphery to ask how they differ in their joining of past and present. In order to examine in sufficient detail the region-specific effects of the war, dictatorship, and transition, their corresponding cultural memories, and their implications on a differentiated identity, I will concentrate especially in the current chapter on one case, that of the Basque Country.

It might be expected that a conflict on the scale of the Spanish Civil War would follow divergent courses across the country, in which economic and social conditions and political climate varied greatly from region to region. In fact, the particularities of the war in the Basque Country are such that they render a grand narrative, applicable to Spain as a whole, inadequate on the local level. The model of the war as a takeover by the military, backed by conservative factions, the church, and aristocracy, and resisted by the democratic government and parties representing the bourgeoisie and revolutionary working classes, does not adequately describe the Basque case. While the conflict pitted Basques against Basques, it also, as historians have argued, took the form of a nationalist war, with one side fighting to maintain newly achieved autonomy. The added factor of the

defense of Basque autonomy altered the socio-ideological makeup of war opponents seen elsewhere in Spain. This was particularly so in the province of Bizkaia, where the uprising was resisted by a conservative, Catholic nationalist movement. The search for rhetorical figures adequate to symbolically represent the war, as both an internal struggle, with multiple factions on each side, and an external struggle to preserve a local identity, continues to inform Basque fictional representations. Many of these representations of Francoism consider not only the memory of past victims, but also the connections between the war and Franco years and separatist violence which, due to ETA terrorism, marked the transition period and persisted into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Basque authors have adopted a wide range of strategies to cipher the war and its aftermath and to represent its continued presence in contemporary times; I will venture to point out some of the common points between them. As I will document in this chapter and the next, Basque novelists frequently emphasize the past and present internal divisions within their collectivity. Using self-conscious narrative structures, they assert a need to remember, but expose the difficulties and dangers of investigating the past, and the impossibility of fully recovering it. Many authors stress the weight of the past, whether of the conflicts of the twentieth century, or of traditional practices of the rural environment, in shaping identity. At the same time, they search for new models of identity that may function in the contemporary, globalized, post-industrial context.

In the current chapter, I will first outline the history of the war, dictatorship, and transition in the Basque country, emphasizing its effect on the “Basque problem” and on local modes of cultural expression. I do so parting from the premise that the object of representation in Basque novels of memory about the war is often not the same as that of

the Spanish novels I have previously discussed. The difference results both from the form of the events themselves in the Basque Country, and from the subsequent interpretive needs of Basques. In reviewing the historical realities represented in memory literature, I will highlight the problems novelists encounter in transforming this history into narrative.

I will then examine certain patterns that emerge in Basque cultural memory of the war, questioning in particular whether there exists the myth of the war as one of many fights for independence from Spain. Finally, because the past seems to play an expanded role in constructing Basque identity, I will consider the history of Basque people in the *longue durée* as rendered in cultural history. Specifically, I will examine the frequent insistence upon extending cultural origins into pre-modern or even prehistoric times.

My purpose is to outline the terms of the debate over identity that is at play in the novel, highlighting what Anthony Smith describes as the “symbolic resources . . . motivating ideologies and collective actions” (16). By identifying the symbolic markers that produce identity, through the analysis of cultural texts from historiography to anthropology to political philosophy, I hope to elucidate the discourses with which Basque literature of memory dialogues. I reserve for chapter four the detailed analysis of a selection of novels reconstructing the past of the war, Francoism, and transition; however, I will draw on novelistic examples to illustrate my reading of Basque literature’s engagement with the past.

It may safely be asserted that Basque authors assume that which is given little attention in novels telling the Spanish national story: that there exists a Basque culture, differentiated, in part, by memories of a common past. However, in many recent Basque novels of memory, the belief in and defense of a differentiated history and identity does

not translate into a celebration of Basque difference. I have pointed out how novels like *Soldados de Salamina* and *La sima* recover Republican memories while placing in doubt the ideological assumptions often involved in doing so. Basque novels, similarly, recover a region-specific past while problematizing the interpretability of the past and the costs of preserving it, and questioning whether the past acts as a foundation for contemporary identity or a burden upon it. I am thinking for example of Ramón Saizarbitoria's "El huerto de nuestros mayores" one of the novellas forming the book *Guárdame bajo tierra*. In the novella, the protagonist Policarpo is entrusted by his father, a devout nationalist and Partido Nacionalista Vasca (PNV) chauffeur in the Civil War, with returning a relic of party founder Sabino Arana's skeleton to his tomb. Dropping the bone into the waters near Arana's grave turns out to lift a tremendous burden from the protagonist. Freed from the "mala herencia" (486) of a lugubrious cult to Arana, the submission to priests and party elders who exclude his father from written accounts of the rescue of Arana's body during the war because of his lowly status as driver, Policarpo is able to look forward to the future, symbolized by a woman he meets at the cemetery.

Against clichés of Basques as a united, resistant, unchanging, millenary people, occupying an idyllic rural world whose rugged geography has proved a buffer against foreign influences, Basque novels narrating the war, or haunted by memories of the war, propose pluralistic, and often conflicted models of Basque society. They represent identity not as monolithic, and not as merely counter-Spanish. Rather, these works emphasize the tensions between contradictory elements: collective memory of a shared past versus memories of past conflicts; the survival of the pre-Romance language of Euskera versus its adaptation to new realities and its overlapping with Spanish; and the

carrying on of tradition and the incorporation of new populations, modes of life, cultural products and political currents. Many of these works also focus self-critically on the more troubled aspects of Basque culture.

Novels such as Ramon Saizarbitoria's *Gorde nazazu lurpean/Guérdame bajo tierra*, (2001), Inazio Mujika Iraola's *Gerezi denbora/Tiempo de cerezas* (1999), Jokin Muñoz's *Antzararen bidea/ El camino de la oca*, (2008, *The Goose's Path*) and Ramiro Pinilla's *Las cenizas del hierro* (2005) emphasize the divisions among Basques, even those participating in the Republican Civil War effort. The Civil War is thus constructed as anything but the war between Spain and the Basque Country of nationalistic mythology – or that, at any rate, the mythology anti-nationalists ascribe to Basque nationalism. Anjel Lertxundi's *Etxeko hausta/Los trapos sucios* (2011), which features a war veteran as one of its protagonists, and a violent, repressed past that cannot be stopped from re-emerging, more than denouncing ETA violence, examines the moral complicity of Basques in the violence. Kirmen Uribe's *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* combines a search for family and village-culture origins, which unearths memories of the war, with an investigation of linguistic (often technologically aided) communication and recording. In *Soinujolearen semea/ El hijo del acordeonista* (2003), Bernardo Atxaga deconstructs the rural/urban, inside/outside dichotomies of Basque society while examining the nature of memory and qualifying the value of preserving a world that is quickly disappearing. In different ways, all of these novels examine how the past is preserved in words, often doubting the reliability of narration or the patterns of meaning narrators attempt to apply to the past.

All of these authors engage or contest narratives of the past generated within a

differentiated culture-specific context, producing new narratives of memory. Thus, my aim is not merely transferring the mode of analysis I have developed so far to peripheral works, but, rather, reading these works against the dialogues in which they participate, employing a “bottom-up” rather than a “top-down” approach.

The argument expressed by Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *El País* column “La historia y el olvido,” on the debate over then Education Minister Esperanza Aguirre’s push for greater state control over the curriculum of history as taught in the autonomous regions, and its critique by Joan Ramon Resina, serves to illustrate the difference. In his article, Muñoz Molina writes: “Las guerras carlistas, la llegada de los telares de vapor y de los ferrocarriles, la rebelión de las Comunidades, no son acontecimientos que afecten sólo al País Vasco, a Cataluña y a Castilla y León, respectivamente, del mismo modo que el dos de mayo no es una fecha que deba conocerse sólo en Madrid, y que el califato de Córdoba no pertenece sólo al pasado de los andaluces.” That the destiny of Spain’s regions is closely intertwined, and that the right/need to remember an event does not merely belong to the place in which it takes place, is an easily defensible proposition. In the next line, however, Muñoz Molina goes further, reading a teleological relationship between the histories of the periphery and of the metropolis: “Cada historia parcial enriquece e ilumina una historia común, que cobra su pleno sentido en el marco más amplio de la Historia europea y aun en el de la Historia Universal, que cada día nos es más necesaria, porque cada día se vuelve más pequeño e interconectado el mundo.”

The implication, as Resina points out, is that the histories of, for example, the Basques and Catalans, are incomplete, that they may only gain their full meaning when placed in the context of a larger history belonging to a larger territory. Resina argues that

“The plea for a unified history of the nation state can be opposed by the democratic demand that history be available to competing identities” (“Short of Memory” 117).

As Basque novels of memory prove, past events need not be placed in the context of a central state, or of Europe, to be fully meaningful or universally relevant. Narrations of the past of the peripheries are complete within their own self-identified communities, rather than “partial histories.” I do not mean that peripheral novels propose definitive interpretations of their communities, but, rather, that they construct the local as complex universes in and of themselves, with histories that take on full, if often contradictory, or debated, meaning within their own contexts.

If there exists a danger of the voices of the periphery being drowned out in telling of history according to the nation state, then listening to them is surely a worthwhile and democratic practice. But I furthermore see the peripheral perspective as an especially rich one, since it is generated in a context that requires heightened awareness of the past and its legacy. Because a minority culture focuses so much energy on affirming its existence, it must focus on self-definition. Therefore, many peripheral writers scrutinize the symbolic practices that describe or construct identity. In post-modern fiction, self-scrutiny overlaps with self-conscious writing, and self-affirmation wrestles with skepticism of truth-affirming discourses. I propose to chart the narrative strategies peripheral writers adopt in affirming identity and self-consciously undermining the means of affirming identity, in splintering from their splinter cultures.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, *La sima* proposes a top-down interpretation of Basque history by figuring ETA violence as another example of Cainistic hatred between brothers. The problem with this reading is not that it attributes terrorism

to universal psychological characteristics, for such a case may be made convincingly. Rather, it is that, by transforming the phenomenon into a side effect of the Spanish personality, the interpretation fails to provide insight into the historical contingencies, the conditions, ideology, and sentiment that gave rise to terrorism in the Basque Country but not in other Iberian peripheral nations. Merino's characters offer abstract generalities of a conflict without exploring how it might be understood by those it most directly affects. In contrast, a number of Basque novels addressing terrorism, as Joseba Gabilondo points out in an article on Atxaga's *Gizona bere bakardadean/ El hombre solo* (1993) and Saizarbitoria's *Hamaika Pauso/ Los pasos incontables* (1995), address "the issue of terrorism, the problem at the core of Basque society, head-on in its historical complexities" ("Terrorism as Memory" 114).

A reading of Basque memory literature, furthermore, must take into account not only the particularities of the history memory interprets and reconstructs, but also the particular significance and uses of the past in identity formation in the Basque cultural arena. It has often been argued that the past, in a general sense, plays an especially significant role in the interpretation and production of Basque identity, since its culture is distinguished by the ongoing use of a language spoken before the arrival of speakers of Indo-European languages. Given that the Basque population has long been a highly educated, literate one, writing on the past, literary or academic, put to political use, has played an expanded role in self-perception of identity. As Paddy Woodworth has put it, "The resulting ethical burden for today's anthropologist is a heavy one" (*The Basque Country* 15). Since the degree of autonomy exercised by the Basque Country has been the region's most pressing, or most visible, political problem during the democratic periods,

and the debate over the legitimacy of its potential sovereignty has often hinged on the region's claim to nationhood, an often-debated cultural identity has also played a disproportionate role in Basque society.

Basque literary writers from Juan Antonio Mogel (1745-1802) to poet and novelist Kirmen Uribe (b. 1970) have often wrestled with the expanded importance of the past and of the expression of a differentiated culture. The question of identity and nation more generally has been at the very center of the foundation of contemporary Basque narrative, by which I mean the body of texts written since the days of late Francoism, a period that has seen an explosion in the number and quality of texts written in Basque⁹. The group of authors who first began writing in Euskera prior to the transition, while often not considering themselves to be nationalists, saw themselves not merely as individual authors, but as committed participants in the labor of establishing and promoting an incipient Basque literature, and steering it in a desired direction.

My aim in this chapter is to explore the productive results of this tangle: the great attention given the past, because of the burden of asserting difference, and the sometimes subversive scrutiny literature applies to narratives of history and nation. Such scrutiny gives many of Basque works their “universal” value. By focusing on memory, often in meta-textual forms that enacts its creation, the Basque novel contributes new understandings of the term memory and its role in forming group identity.

⁹ Avoiding subjective standards of taste, one may consider the admittedly imperfect yardsticks that indicate a striking difference in production prior to and after the dictatorship. These include the growing number of Basque language authors receiving Spain's *Premio Nacional de Narrativa* since 1989 (Bernardo Atxaga, Unai Elorriaga, Kirmen Uribe), the frequency of translations put out by major Spanish publishing houses (for example of works by Atxaga, Elorriaga, Anjel Lertxundi, and Ramon Saizarbitoria in Alfaguara; of Uribe and Harkaitz Cano in Seix Barral), and an increase in international critical attention, especially to Atxaga.

3.2. Civil War and Aftermath in the Basque Country

Though a history of the Civil War and its aftermath in the Basque Country falls outside the scope of this study, I will offer here a brief summary to highlight the particularities of the region's involvement in the war and its consequences¹⁰. My aim is to point out how the narrative patterns shaping national-scope fictionalization of the war do not necessarily apply to the Basque case. In the process, I will expose the historical traumas to which Basque literature responds, those episodes of the past that continue to demand reinterpretation. These are episodes that must be considered in light of the prevalence of nationalist or particularistic sentiment, given that close to half of the population of the three provinces administered as Euskadi or the Comunidad Autónoma Vasca (CAV) ascribes to nationalism and votes for nationalist parties. For this group, the debatably incomplete nature of the Civil War/transition, which I have described in the previous chapters, has left open one question more pressing than others: the nature of Spain's "estado de autonomías" and Basques' claim to nationhood.

Tzvetan Todorov has theorized that historical accounts may be divided into two master narratives: those that narrate stories of heroism and those that narrate stories of victimization. The two narratives divide actors into four roles: heroes, beneficiaries, villains, and victims (142). *Mala gente que camina* fits the mold of a victim story, while *Soldados de Salamina*, more problematically, might be termed a hero narrative. One distinctive characteristic of the Civil War in the Basque Country is that binaries such as right versus left, fascism versus democracy, executioner versus victims, are especially difficult to sustain in accounts of the events taking place there. During the war, certain

¹⁰ For reliable, extended accounts of the history of the war, dictatorship and transition, see Fusi, Payne, "Catalan and Basque Nationalism," Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, and Aguilar, "Política y ética."

segments of the population of the Basque Country and Navarra participated in the major leftist movements while others comprised the bulk of Franco's most ardent voluntary corps, the Carlist militias. The Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco, or PNV), which controlled the area that remained loyal to the Republic, may not readily be classified in either ideological block.

The bitter divisions within the Republican side come to the fore in *La guerra perdida del viejo gudari*, the first novella of Ramon Saizarbitoria's *Guárdame bajo tierra*. Having fought on the Republican side, as the protagonist, an elderly veteran of a PNV battalion, has done, is not enough to solidify a position as either hero or victim. In repetitive arguments on the war that show its emotional irresolution, those of the protagonist's friends who fought with revolutionary organizations attack the PNV for its reluctance to join the war and its degree of attachment to the Church (35-6).

An all-important and distinguishing feature of the war in the Basque Country was the stakes of the fight, which included not only governmental form and political ideology, but also the status of Basque autonomy. The war brought not only the end of democratic/ (or ad-hoc, revolutionary) government, as in the rest of Spain, but also profoundly affected in both the short and long term what is often called the "problema vasco," or "Basque problem." (This is the term used to describe the political status of the Basque Country, its degree of autonomy from the Spanish state, and the favoring/curtailing of local forms of cultural expression.) The later years of Francoism and the transition brought about a renegotiation of everything that had been determined by the war; at the level of the Spanish state, this included the form of national government and the rights of parties to participate in state rule. For the peripheral nationalities, especially the Basque

Country and Catalonia, the transition meant the reexamination of their integration into the Spanish state. While in the last ten to fifteen years many Spanish intellectuals have questioned the results of what has often been considered a model transition, the debate over the relationship between the Basque and central governments forged in the 1978 constitution and the 1979 statute of autonomy has never ceased to mark the political and cultural life of the Basque Country.

The rhetorical figure of “Las dos Españas,” most famously used by the poet Antonio Machado, has often served to describe the left/right divide in Spanish politics and class-based society that contributed to the outbreak of the war. However, as Juan Pablo Fusi points out, Basque political ideology in the years leading to the war was split not into two but three categories, “las tres con hondas raíces sociológicas en la sociedad vasca: derecha españolista, nacionalismo vasco e izquierda democrático-socialista” (21). The latter two groupings, while appealing to electorate of different classes and ethnic backgrounds, promoted platforms that sought to assuage the same phenomena: the sweeping transformations brought on by industrialization, particularly in Bilbao and its environs such as the influx of immigrants from non-Basque areas of Spain, rapid urbanization, the increase in wage occupations (often under poor work conditions).

As in Saizarbitoria’s novel, the relationship between nationalism and socialism and other revolutionary movements in the war and pre-war periods appears thematized in a number of Basque works. In Ramiro Pinilla’s *Verdes valles colinas rojas* trilogy, for example, an ill-fated love affair between the *baserritar* (peasant) Roque Altube and worker’s movement activist Isidora symbolizes the chasm between the two worldviews. At stake in the political debates enacted in the novel is the meaning of freedom,

something that is fought for by many of the characters. Is it the political autonomy that nationalists seek, freedom from capitalist oppression that the striking workers fight for, or, in a third option, espoused by the anarchistic daughter and son of a rich industrialist family, liberty to bath nude in the waters off of Getxo?

In ideological terms, the PNV, founded by Sabino Arana at the turn of the century, and the dominant political party during the Republic, stood outside major groupings of Spanish politics. As a conservative, confessional party expressly seeking autonomy for the Basque Country, it had no ideological match at the national level. As Fusi puts it, “La izquierda recelaba del PNV quizá más por reaccionario que por nacionalismo. . . . El centro-derecha recelaba menos del nacionalismo por reaccionario que por nacionalista” (205).

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil war resulted in what many, including Stanley Payne, have described as “a Civil War between the Basques of the four provinces” (*Basque Nationalism* 164). In conservative Navarra, which had declined to participate in the PNV’s negotiation of an autonomous regime for Álava, Guipuzcoa, and Vizcaya, the military uprising was completely successful. As Payne puts it, Navarra “immediately became the strongest bulwark of the insurgent Spanish nationalist cause,” backed fervently by Carlists, who had already mobilized militias before the rebellion (*Basque Nationalism* 164). Álava fell quickly to the uprising, while order was completely maintained in Vizcaya. In Guipúzcoa, the uprising was put down by revolutionary militias, while the PNV attempted, not always successfully, to ensure the safety of political prisoners (Payne, *Basque Nationalism* 165-6).

The PNV, as a political misfit, was at first slow to take sides in the war, but joined

the Republican effort after the Spanish national forces had committed reprisals against its members in Navarra and Álava, and after determining that it had better chances at securing autonomy under the Republic than under the new government (Aguilar, “Política y ética” 7). In fact, the Basque government in October 1936, after years of peace-time negotiation, succeeded in obtaining a statute of autonomy, though at the time only Vizcaya and a small portion of Guipúzcoa remained under Republican rule.

Daniele Conversi has argued that, “Unlike in Catalonia, the Civil War in the Basque country was experienced as a nationalist war” (224). The argument is supported by a number of factors. The isolation of the Basque Country, which along with a strip of territories along the Bay of Biscay, had been cut off from the main Republican zone, gave the autonomous government under José Antonio de Aguirre freedom to conduct its own war effort. The autonomous government created its own institutions and even printed its own currency (Aguilar, “Política y ética” 17). With the battalions fighting in the Basque Country organized by political affiliation, Aguirre’s government directly controlled the largest contingent, the *gudariak* of the PNV. The collapse of Basque institutions with the fall of Vizcaya, the refusal of many *gudariak* to fight outside the borders of the Basque country, and the ultimately failed attempts of the remnants of the Basque government to broker a separate peace with the Italian expeditionary force, add further weight to idea that the Basques fought their own war within the Civil War.

However, the support for Franco among conservative segments of the Vizcayan populations, including the majority of the industrial oligarchy, precludes an overly simplistic schematization of the war as pitting Euskadi against Spain. Furthermore, the army that swept through Vizcaya under general Mola was comprised largely of Navarran

volunteers, as well as Basques from Álava and Guipúzcoa (Payne, *Basque Nationalism* 191-2).

Paloma Aguilar sums up thusly the particularities of the war in the Basque Country: “la escasa combatividad de los nacionalistas hasta la obtención del Estatuto, la falta de entendimiento entre las jerarquías militares republicanas y los nacionalistas vascos, los recelos existentes entre los izquierdistas y los nacionalistas, las numerosas desertiones hacia el campo enemigo, la rápida rendición de los batallones vascos en Guipúzcoa y la negativa de los nacionalistas vascos, cuando la caída de Bilbao era inminente, a destruir su industria pesada con el fin de que dicho arsenal no cayera íntegro en manos de los franquistas . . . la reticencia de los *gudaris* . . . a combatir fuera del País Vasco (“Política y ética” 8).

The PNV’s conservative, anti-revolutionary ideology created a number of peculiar circumstances: the only instance of a right-wing party participating in the *juntas* that filled the political vacuum after the uprising; perhaps the lowest incidence of reprisals on either side of the conflict, particularly after the statute of autonomy; the absence of popular revolution in a Republican territory (Payne, *Basque Nationalism* 165, 179-81).

Paloma Aguilar asserts that in the early years of the postwar, contrary to what is often supposed, the Basque Country suffered fewer political executions and other forms of violent repression. This was due to the intervention of the church, which argued for leniency on the grounds of Basque nationalism’s conservatism and Catholicism (“Política y ética” 9). However, as Aguilar points out, “a lo largo del franquismo, la represión cultural que se ejerció sobre todo el país pudo llegar a resultar especialmente dolorosa en aquellas regiones en las que se hablaba un idioma distinto del español, dado que a éstas

se las impedía comunicarse en su propia lengua (“Política y ética” 9).

There is little question, at any rate, that the social unrest and violence of late Francoism particularly affected the Basque Country, as ETA and splinter groups become increasingly active after 1968, and the central government took aggressive measures in response. As Fusi puts it,

[El] País Vasco . . . que fue quizá la única región española que no experimentó un proceso revolucionario como consecuencia de la guerra civil . . . iba a ser escenario a partir de 1968-70 de una de las más intensas, enconadas, y dramáticas escaladas de violencia de la historia contemporánea española, que iba a dejar en los próximos diez años un balance de varios centenares de muertes y heridos . . . una cifra altísima de atentados, atracos, explosiones, choques callejeros, huelgas generales, movilizaciones populares; el País Vasco iba a experimentar, en suma, . . . una crisis de dimensiones nacionales que haría que el problema vasco acabara por convertirse en el problema más espinoso y difícil que tendría que afrontar el régimen de Franco en sus años finales y la Monarquía constitucional . . . en los años iniciales de su existencia. (207)

The extent of violence marking the end of the transition out of Francoism, the continuation of terrorism in the democracy, and the temporal proximity of these traumas, suggest that a permutated Civil War was being lived through more intensely and more recently in the Basque Country.

Furthermore, in the eyes of significant proportion of the Basque population, the pacts and elections of the transition years failed to satisfactorily settle the problem of the region’s territorial allegiance with Spain which was at stake in the war of 1936-1939. The solidity of the consensus on the Constitution of 1978 achieved throughout Spain was lacking in the Basque Country. While about two thirds of eligible voters cast ballots throughout Spain in the constitutional referendum, the overwhelming majority in favor, the provinces of what is now the Comunidad Autónoma Vasca, especially Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, saw an extremely high rate of abstention, in part as a result of nationalist

campaigning. Though the “Yes” votes won handily, more Basque voters declined to vote at all than voted in favor of the constitution (“Referéndum sobre el Proyecto de Constitución”). This has allowed nationalists to argue that the majority of Basques never consented to provisions that incorporate the Basque Country into Spain, an argument made for example in the short documentary “Ikuska 0: Erreferenduma” (Antton Ezeiza, 1979).

The question of autonomy continues to mark political life in the CAV, Catalonia, Navarra, and to a lesser extent Galicia and Spain as whole. A number of intellectuals from peripheral perspectives continue to express dissatisfaction with the current solution. Historian Xosé-Manoel Nuñez argued in 2005 that “The national question remains one of the unresolved problems of Spanish democracy 25 years after the framing of the 1978 Constitution” (57). This is true in part because “One of the key characteristics of the 1978 Constitution is its ambiguity in defining crucial concepts. On the one hand, it states that Spain is the sole existing Nation . . . but on the other hand it recognize[es] the existence of ‘nationalities’ and regions, without clearly establishing the difference between a nationality and nation” (59).¹¹

Though the negotiation of the state of autonomies does not frequently appear directly in novels of war and historical memory in the Basque Country, its corollaries, particularly terrorist violence, is recurrent. Terrorism and terrorists are explored as dominant theme in novels such as Atxaga’s *El hombre solo* and *Esos cielos*, Saizarbitoria’s *100 metros* and *Los pasos incontables*, and Lertxundi’s *Los trapos sucios*, among others.

¹¹ For further evidence of the dissatisfaction with transition state-crafting among certain sectors in the peripheries see Gurrutxaga’s analysis or the arguments against the model of the state of the autonomies put forth in Salvador Cardús or in Joan Ramon Resina “Short of Memory”.

Jokin Muñoz's *El camino de la oca* provides an example of the symbolic linking of the Civil War and ETA violence in a narrative of memory, one in which the relationship between the two conflicts is shown to be complex, and the author's position ambiguous. The conflicts are connected in several ways. First, an impersonal third-person narration juxtaposes two primary plot threads, jumping back and forth from the prewar and Civil War era to the present. The wartime plot describes the social-ideological conflict in a fictional town in the plains of southern Navarra, which culminate in the execution or humiliation of a small band of Republican sympathizers. The present-day plot narrates a mother's struggles after her son Igor, unbeknownst to her an ETA member and apparent assassin, dies mishandling an explosive. The novel makes use of a number of images to connect the two chrono-spaces: the blackbirds of the town in the Navarran Ribera and the seagulls of San Sebastian, where the latter action takes place; the sea of wheat in Navarra and the ocean off of San Sebastian. Most importantly, the dead son, Igor, conceived by the mother Lisa in a drug-and-alcohol-induced blackout, and whose father's identity is therefore never known, turns out to be the double, in appearance and personality, of one of the Republicans of the earlier plot.

The novel therefore sets up the Basque conflict as the permuted, ongoing continuation of the Civil War. Both Dioni the Republican, a hard-drinking, thuggish, but charismatic character, and Igor, who ends up trying to take care of his tired, drug-addicted mother, are portrayed positively. And yet, the sympathetic light shown for Dioni and his friends does not extend to any of Igor's milieu. Following Igor's death, politicians of the nationalist radical left and their followers instrumentalize his memory for political protest, without seeming to have any knowledge of or interest in Igor the person. None,

including Igor's girlfriend, are willing to console or even converse with his grieving mother, showing their protest slogan "Igor, gogoan zaitugu!" ("Igor, we remember you!") to be a hollow one. Igor may continue Dioni's struggle, but he has somehow ended up fighting in the wrong war.

3.3. Basque Memory Tropes: Civil vs. Foreign War

I have outlined in the previous section the ways in which the narrative of the war, dictatorship, and transition applicable to Spain, as the struggle and eventual pact, satisfactory or not, between the two Spains, fails to encapsulate the experience of the Basque Country. As Gurrutxaga, summarizes, "the founding moment of Basque democracy is different from [that of] other places in Spain" (82). My question now becomes, what narratives do fit the Basque case? How are the fall and return of democracy remembered in the Basque Country? Before examining the fiction on these topics, I will outline, in broad strokes, how the war and Francoism are approached in non-literary memory. I ask, how do the discourses with which literature engages figure the past? What are the figurations that literature builds upon, showing the problematic or incomplete nature of the truths they espouse? These questions must be approached in the light of unusual circumstances in the Basque Country: that a shared past is needed to forge group identity, while there is little consensus even on what the group sharing memories is.

The interpretation and narration of the past is of utmost importance in a community whose definition (whether as a sovereign nation, as a region of Spain, or as something in between) continues to be searched for and debated. In most definitions of

“nation,” a shared conception of the past, often of an originating past bearing normative lessons, is seen as a key factor. For Anthony Smith, to cite but one example, the nation is “a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or ‘homelands,’ create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized laws” (30).

As in the Spanish case at large, there is of course, no single answer, no generally accepted interpretation of the Basque past, and points of view are often linked with cultural and political affiliation. In an ideologically polarized population, it is to be expected that a consensus on the legacy of Francoism is unlikely. It must be emphasized that the “Basque problem,” which has remained at the center of the Basque political life, is not merely a question of a region negotiating its self-rule with the state that controls its sovereignty. Rather, the population of the Basque Country itself is deeply split on what it means to be Basque, and on the related questions of linguistic and cultural policy and political autonomy. In summarizing this reality, William Douglass et. al. invoke the image of two Basque Countries: “Contemporary Basque society within the Spanish state has been described as being socially and culturally polarized between the so-called two communities. The Basque political spectrum has a plethora of parties divided clearly into Spanish-nationalist and Basque-nationalist blocs (each with its own left-right continuum)” (Douglass, Urza, White, and Zulaika 3-4).

Sociological studies indicate that there is no clear demarcation between the two blocks, however, that most people in the Basque Country report overlapping national identities. As I have pointed out in the previous section in my discussion of wartime

politics, Basque political polarization is thus perhaps better conceived as being kaleidoscopic rather than binary. In a recent *Euskobarómetro*, the periodical survey conducted annually by the University of the Basque Country in the CAV provinces, most Basques conceived of themselves in varying degrees of Basque-Spanish hybridity.¹²

According to electoral results, the ideological categories that Fusi described in prewar Basque society remain more or less intact in the CAV. As Gurrutxaga summarizes: “concerning electoral affinities, Basque society is very pluralistic, with over half of the population voting for nationalist parties and a little less than half voting for the Socialist or Popular parties (the latter achieves best results in general elections to the Spanish Parliament, while the former achieve best results in autonomic and local elections)” (84). (In elections in the more conservative and regionalist Navarra, nationalist parties have fared significantly worse.) Sociological surveys also reflect the political division of the Basque Country in similar proportions.¹³ The divide means, as Gurrutxaga points out, that the cultural reality of the Basque Country does not correspond to a Spanish or Basque nationalist program, and that extreme solutions to the Basque problem in any direction appear to be impossible.

Identity as experienced by Basques further departs from nationalistic ideal-type in the range of both manner and degree in which individuals ally themselves to one or more than one nation. As Rubert de Ventós points out, national identity may be seen as but one element in a hierarchy of allegiances that varies from person to person: “nuestra

¹² A significant minority viewed itself as either exclusively Basque (30 percent) or Spanish (7 percent). However, 36 percent described themselves as being “as Basque as Spanish,” 21 percent said they were “more Basque than Spanish,” and 3 percent said they were “more Spanish than Basque” (*Euskobarómetro mayo 2011* 53).

¹³ In the last the May 2011 *Euskobarómetro*, 46 percent of respondents declared themselves to be nationalists while 49 percent identified themselves as non-nationalists (50).

singularidad más íntima nos es dada a través de una pertinencia colectiva, o, mejor dicho, mediante una serie de pertinencias: familiar, racial. Ciudadana, sexual, gremial” (39).

As pertains to this study, the pluralism of the Basque Country indicates the difficulty of forming a national narrative of history accurately recognizing local particularities and internal divisions, and to which the entire population might ascribe. It may go without saying that in a pluralistic society such as the Basque one, in which members have a range of understanding on what being Basque is, in a territory that furthermore has seen massive immigration to its industrial centers throughout the twentieth and late nineteenth centuries, there can be no single commonly accepted image of the past.

I will point out however the narrative tropes that channel how the past is retold, tropes that have become focus points for debate. Two that weigh heavily on identity formation appear most frequently in writing on Basque history, one directly related to the Civil War, the other not. The first is the vision of war as a conflict between Basques and Spaniards which resulted in a continuing legacy of resistance and of separatist violence. The second is the vision of Basque culture as being rooted in an ancient, primordial past, a past that lends it legitimacy and continues to exert its influence.

Generally speaking, Basque novelists represent the war in more complex terms than as a struggle between Spain and the Basque Country, in fact thematizing the internal divisions of the Basque Country and the interrelatedness of the two sides. This is true, at the very least, of the authors I have selected for discussion, which include the better-known and most read ones. Sources of the discourse of the war as an invasion of the Basque Country appear most frequently in expressions of radical nationalism, and in

anti-Basque-nationalist polemic (often by non-Basque Spaniards), where the belief is attributed to nationalism and decried. I would argue that the conception appears also in moderate nationalist writing, but less frequently and more obliquely.

Given the polarization of politics in the Basque Country, it is perhaps not surprising that analysis of historical memory by both Basque and Spanish writers can take the form of attacks on an opponent's position (or a straw-man version of his/her position) rather than a dialogue with it. José Díaz Herrera's *Los mitos del nacionalismo vasco. De la guerra civil a la sucesión*, for example, fails to live up to its title's implied promise of examining commonly held popular beliefs. Rather, the book, written in the vein of right-wing revisionism of Pío Moa and César Vidal (who contributed its prologue), narrates the twentieth-century history of the Basque Country while portraying the PNV, nationalism, and Basques in general in the worst possible light, with occasional forays into criticism of the Socialist party at the Basque and Spanish national level.¹⁴ In nearly 900 pages, Díaz Herrera rarely cites any evidence for the myths he is disproving, the few exceptions including quotations of nineteenth-century historiography (e.g. 469) and a controversial speech by Xabier Arzalluz (26) without any date or source. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the author barely even describes the alleged myths to which his title refers. A rare exception is his assertion that "La mitología vasca les ha elevado [a los *gudaris*] a los altares como héroes, como grandes guerreros, feroces y bravos hasta la temeridad, individuos intrépidos, osados y sacrificados a la vez, dispuestos a aceptar el

¹⁴ For the purpose of the current study I am more interested in analyzing discursive treatment of historical moments than in evaluating historiographical accuracy. That said, it must be noticed that the journalist Díaz Herrera stands starkly at odds with the historians I have cited above on questions such as the Basque government's treatment of prisoners. The author portrays the Basque government as having incited an extermination of political opponents in its territory, while it is generally accepted that the nationalist party stands out as an exception on either side of the war for efforts to prevent war crimes.

martirio antes que perder su libertad primigenia. . . . Pero la realidad es muy distinta” (469).

The rather banal assertion – that nationalism chauvinistically portrays local soldiers as heroes – is no doubt verifiable. An article in a special section on the website of the Bizkaia newspaper *Deia* on Basque history, for example, asserts that the Basque government was able to survive Franco’s coup for 11 months thanks to the “arrojo y valentía de toda una generación de jóvenes vascos que, sin ser un ejército profesional, tomaron las armas para hacer frente a las superiores tropas del bando nacional. Su decidida y sacrificada resistencia a los sublevados les hizo ganarse el sobrenombre de héroes que dio la vuelta al mundo” (Jauregi). Díaz, however, quotes a passage from foralist historiography on the valor of Basque soldiers rather than demonstrating the myth’s twenty-first century currency. In my view, the absence of documentation weakens Díaz’s arguments, preventing the reader from retracing the author’s analysis of evidence. However, the absence of the point of view of those Díaz Herrera is attacking allows his audience, in likelihood a sympathetic one, to create its own version of that view point. The chapter title “Vascos contra vascos” (79), for example, allows the reader to fill in for himself the never openly stated suggestion that the war is mythologized as “Vascos contra españoles.”

Another extreme example in academic writing occurs in semiotic professor Juan Alonso Aldama’s analysis of what he calls in the title of his essay “La construcción mítica del discurso nacionalista vasco.” Alonso Aldama attributes a series of beliefs, rhetorical strategies, and efforts to “el discurso nacionalista vasco,” “el nacionalismo vasco,” or “los nacionalistas.” Among them is:

la interpretación por “la historiografía nacionalista vasca” de la participación de los vascos en la Guerra Civil Española. La idea comúnmente difundida y pregonada por el nacionalismo vasco, es que los vascos participaron en esta guerra para recuperar y defender las viejas libertades del País Vasco, y que salieron vencidos. Esta interpretación, que concuerda perfectamente con los propósitos del nacionalismo, es un buen ejemplo del trabajo de selección y de clasificación que realiza el discurso histórico nacionalista. (116-7)

Alonso Aldama’s assertion begs several questions: chiefly who exactly makes such an interpretation, and how is it disseminated and proclaimed? But Aldama, in a 15-page paper, cites by title and author only one text by what could be considered a nationalist thinker: Jorge Oteiza’s *Quosque Tandem!* (1963). At the same time, he cites as sources of nationalist thought the descriptions of it offered by perhaps the two most renown anti-nationalists past and present the Basque Country has produced: Unamuno and Jon Juaristi.

Juaristi (*Bucle* 37) and Mikel Azurmendi (64), another of the most prominent anti-nationalist intellectuals/polemicists, reiterate the claim that nationalists see the Civil War as a Spanish invasion. In his book decrying ETA and radical left-wing nationalism, Azurmendi sees the revising of the meaning of the war in the 1960s by ETA and its sympathizers as a founding moment in a hostilely anti-Spanish identity. As a polemical essay rather than a historiographical exercise, Azurmendi’s book provides little documentation for this point, beyond citing an anonymous *etarra* interviewed in *Punto y hora* who links his own actions to those of ancestral Basques dating to the eighth-century battle of Roncesvalles (100). Azurmendi, who is without a doubt well versed in the history of ETA, could easily have pointed out that some of the group’s earliest actions in the 1960s included vandalizing war monuments and an attempt to derail a train transporting veterans of the national forces to a commemoration of Franco’s victory

(Sullivan 36). Unfortunately, Azurmendi's book, like Díaz's, concentrates more on persuasion through rhetoric than on documentation.

Fernando Savater, in my view the most persuasive of the prominent anti-nationalist polemicists, does add a minimum of sources for the *Mito nacionalista* he describes in his book of what he labels "apuntes y polémicas": for example, quotations (though often without a documented citation) of Xavier Arzalluz, or the 1960s documentary *Ama lur*.

Basques who are not considered anti-nationalists have also alluded to the prevalence of the commonplace of the war as battle between Spain and Euskadi. Kirmen Uribe, who appears to have made a deliberate effort to avoid public political statements, has explained the inclusion of his Francoist grandfather in *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* thus: "necesitaba verbalizar que uno de mis abuelos – por cobardía, por interés, no sé por qué – optó por el bando incorrecto, no seguir obviando una realidad tantas veces silenciada: la Guerra Civil fue también una guerra entre vascos, no una invasión de los franquistas" (Rodríguez Marcos).

Santiago de Pablo and Igor Barrenetxea detect the trope of the Civil War as a Spanish-Basque war in film; interestingly, they discover it in foreign-made documentaries. One case (*Los hijos de Gernika*; 1968), produced through the efforts of the PNV in exile in Venezuela, may be considered an example of party ideology. Another film, *Gernika: Arbolaren Espiritua/Gernika, el espíritu del árbol* (1987), co-produced by a Basque and a British company, according to Pablo and Barrenetxea "carga las tintas sobre la significación del bombardeo como una venganza perpetrada por Franco contra el pueblo vasco" (183). Such a shading occurs despite the discrepancy with the

interpretation by two of the primary interview subjects, Bernardo Atxaga and the sculptor Eduardo Chillida, leading the critics to attribute the ideology to two possible sources: “la parte vasca de la producción” and “algunas visiones estereotipadas de Euskadi desde el extranjero” (183).

However, as we have seen in Aldama, the claim of the existence of a Spain-versus-Euskadi interpretation of the war often is not attributed to named sources. Juaristi, for example, contrasts legitimate historiography with nationalist historiography that emerges “a través de las series de documentales ‘históricos’ emitidos por la televisión autonómica, por ejemplo” (*Bucle* 37). Manuel Montero, writing without Juaristi’s tone of polemical accusation – in an article defending the instruction of history carried out in Basque schools from political attacks at the time – elaborates further:

[A]bundan las publicaciones que difunden una estrambótica versión de nuestro pasado, al servicio de la ideología dominante, el nacionalismo vasco. Con cierta frecuencia se publican textos, subvencionados incluso por la Consejería de Cultura, con afirmaciones del tipo de que Euskadi está sometida a las Constituciones del Estado francés y del Estado español que son sustancialmente opresoras de lo vasco. En la misma línea, las guerras carlistas no serían sino guerras nacionales, en las que los vascos lucharon contra España. . . . Basta ver las versiones de la historia y de la cultura emitidas por ETB, una televisión nacionalista, para sufrir constantes sobresaltos. . . . En la guerra civil -una lucha de España contra Euskadi, en esta versión- sólo combatieron los nacionalistas. . . . No hay duda, por tanto, de que el nacionalismo tiene su construcción ideologizada de la historia. Ni de que la difunde con profusión en sus medios de comunicación. . . . Con la Transición, el nacionalismo emergió con unas convicciones míticas de la historia. Libros, fascículos, folletos divulgativos, etc., difundían la versión nacionalista de la historia. (“La enseñanza de la historia” 172-3)

More work remains to be done to document these types of sources and how they render the past; an in-depth study of nationalist historiographical materials written or broadcast since the transition to my knowledge has yet to be undertaken. Such a study would be

welcome because it could move the discussion on nationalism and historiography beyond the polemical reiterations I have cited.

In contrast, a number of insightful studies have addressed the ways in which institutionalized, party-based nationalism has addressed the war past and its symbols in speeches, writing, and ceremony. These include Ludger Mees's essay on the symbolic importance of the painting "Guernica" and the town Gernika, Félix Luengo Teixidor and Ander Delgado Cendagortagalarza's essay on the uses of the Gernika tree, and Manuel Montero's "Las sagas del pasado vasco en la interpretación nacionalista de la historia" and "La historia y el nacionalismo. La visión del pasado en el partido nacionalista vasco, 1976-2005." (Another separate, and perhaps more difficult, question is to what extent the texts of cultural memory created by political elites has, in Anthony Smith's term, resonated with the rank-and-file population and entered in the realm of accepted everyday, communicative memory.)

While my own study of non-literary cultural memory on the war in the Basque Country is by no means exhaustive, I would suggest that the interpretation of the Civil War as a Spanish invasion does appear in radical left-wing nationalist sources, but less typically in moderate nationalist sources. In the latter case, it is often insinuated rather than expressed directly. History is spun – the above quoted term "cargar la tintas" is apt – rather than re-written.

A prime example of the former comes in an ideological pamphlet published in 2008 by Herri Bastasuna – by then an illegalized party – on the thirtieth anniversary of its founding. The pamphlet proclaims the *izquierda abertzale*, that is, the radical Basque left, to be the "semencero [sic] de Euskal Herria, abonado por una historia secular de

resistencias y de orgullo nacional. Un semencero que se resistía a perder el humus de su lengua nacional, que tenía viva la memoria de *invasiones* pretéritas –1839, 1876, 1936–; que no aceptaba las vías muertas de los pactos con el estatalismo español” (5, emphasis added). The Civil War is thus listed as one more invasion, along with the Carlist wars of the nineteenth century, by a Spanish state bent on curtailing Basque self-rule. The interpretation is in keeping with HB’s rhetorical figuration of the Basque Country as being at war with the Spanish state or as the victim of Spanish repression. For instance, in Julio Medem’s *La pelota vasca*, Arnaldo Otegi, the spokesman for HB, asserts that “En doscientos años no hay una sola generación de vascos que no haya conocido la cárcel, el exilio, la tortura y la muerte ligada a la política.”

Otegi’s point, though an obvious hyperbole, can be supported by invoking the so-called “guerra sucia,” which involved the state-supported torture and assassinations of ETA members (Woodworth, *Dirty War*). However, the depiction of the war as an invasion is impossible to sustain in any detailed account with a minimum of accuracy, and I have not encountered any such attempt. I may cite as an example the historiography of Francisco Letamendia (Ortzi), a former member of Herri Batasuna who in the early 2000s was involved in highly publicized, ideologically charged battle for a post at the University of the Basque Country. In an introductory segment to the Imanol Uribe documentary *El proceso de Burgos*, Letamendia, in a pacing lecture in front of the Nervión River, briefly exposes a left-nationalist version of Basque history, in which he characterizes the 1970 trial of ETA members as another “hito” in “la larga lucha del pueblo vasco por recuperar su identidad nacional.” In his writing on the war in the Basque Country in *Breve historia de Euskadi*, his choice of terminology (the two sides

are described as Basques and Fascists, the bombing of Gernika is called an “holocausto”), as well as his selection of data (1,654 dead at Gernika, a figure now generally accepted to be greatly exaggerated) further indicate his sympathies. But the narrative of events in his chapter “Fascismo contra nacionalismo vasco y Estatuto de autonomía. La guerra civil y exilio” does not much differ from the one I have cited in Fusi, Payne and Aguilar, including the mention of internal conflict between nationalists and anarchists (176), the participation of forty thousand Carlist *requetés* from Navarra in the uprising (173), and the allegiance of Basque nationalists from Álava, including *mendigoizales* (174), to Franco’s cause.

Similarly, in Xabier Arzalluz’s autobiography *Así fue*, the former *lehendakari* and PNV leader, in his brief mention of the war, does not hide his Basque-speaking father’s involvement in the Francoist side as a Carlist. The book’s primary aim seems to be a sympathetic portrayal of the former politician, his party, and a traditionalist view of an egalitarian Basque culture. Rather than aligning his father or the Basque cause with Republicanism, Arzalluz forms a positive image of Basque participation in the war by stressing the lack of reprisals in his town of Azkoita and the refusal of his father and others to furnish a list of enemies to the rebels. (The account of events in José de Arteche’s wartime diary, on the other hand, mentions firing squad executions of enemy combatants on both sides in the area of Azpeitia and Azkoita [35-40].) Describing the cape his father wears upon his return, Arzalluz suggests his (and by extension Basques’) honorable comportment in war: “Ése fue todo su botín de guerra” (22).

Yet, as quoted by Fernando Savater and the newspaper *ABC*, Arzalluz has, in formats not requiring a longer narrative of the war, made rhetorical gestures portraying

the Basque Country as an occupied land as a result of past wars. In 1995, he praised his audience of Argentinian PNV affiliates as “representantes de los mejores hijos de esta tierra, de los que no se resignaron a la invasión” (“Arzalluz dice”). A t-shirt worn by many at an Alderdi Eguna gathering, the PNV’s annual celebration of its party, as Savater reports (30), featured an image of the comic-book Gauls Asterix and Obelix with the slogan “Invadidos pero no vencidos.” The t-shirt, projecting its message in a format that precludes historiographical analysis, speaks to the existence of a degree of resonance of the idea that the Basque Country has been invaded among PNV militants.

The request on the part of the PNV that Zapatero’s Spanish government apologize for the bombing of Guernica, which I have described in chapter 1, may well revive, as the historian Ludger Meer suggests, “el viejo pensamiento maniqueo sabiniano de España contra Euskadi” (554). However, the request was phrased in such a way as to do so indirectly, by leaving itself open for such an interpretation, but not explicitly formulating such thinking. After all, it is not unusual for governments to apologize for injustices against its own people. The United States, for example, in 2008 apologized for slavery and “Jim Crow” laws.

In any case, the myth of the war as an invasion enjoys little currency in the Basque novel. On the contrary, Basque novels of memory often focus on internal divisions, to the point that one may infer a deliberate effort to break with the myth. I shall show this to be the case in chapter 4 through my analysis of Uribe’s *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, but several other novels would illustrate this point. To cite one example, Joan Mari Irigoien’s *Poliedroaren hostoak/La tierra y el viento*, published in 1982 in Basque and translated under the author’s supervision into Spanish in 1997, uses the recurrent

motif of earth and air to symbolize two Basque ideologies in conflict. The novel, which is structured in part by a protagonist's investigation in order to finish writing a family history begun by his ancestors, follows two families from the time of the Carlist wars to the end of the Franco dictatorship.

The book categorizes the two families, both equally Basque, according to nature metaphors: one, made up of Carlists who fight in the uprisings, is comprised of earth and is in touch with nature and the spiritual world; the other is comprised of air, fascinated by science, and fights on the liberal side. In the days of the Carlist wars the families remain bitter enemies. However, in subsequent generations, earth and air bloodlines mix, in ever-complex combinations, so that Joxe, one of the characters who fight in the Civil War, is described as “formado por cien piezas” (10). The split between Liberals and Carlists represented in the earth/air motif is drawn further into the interior of those of Joxe's generation, so that the individual is essentially his own enemy. As for the Civil War, the chief villain in the novel is not an outsider but a local oligarch named Don Antonio.

More recent examples of books that through plot or symbolic devices break with the insider/outside war dynamic include Inazio Mujika Iraola's *Gerezi denbora*, published in Basque in 1999 and in Spanish in 2006 as *Tiempo de cerezas*. In the novel, which is set the Civil War, and, apart from occasional moments of violence, tends toward the light-hearted adventure genre, the PNV and revolutionary groups are shown to be in constant conflict. Allegiances cross the battlefield lines; in the main plot the narrator, a member of a revolutionary militia, agrees to help a priest who is a child-hood acquaintance liberate a bishop from possible death at the hands of the *milicianos* who are holding him.

3.4. Basque (Pre)historic Memory

If the war is seen as a determining moment in shaping the contemporary dynamics of the Basque problem, a moment that must be reckoned with in examinations of the past, Basque cultural memory often turns to a far older past. The insistence on the primeval origins of Basque culture receives parody treatment in Ramiro Pinilla's *Verdes valles, colinas rojas* trilogy, in flashbacks in which the present-tense characters' ancestors, all with the same names and personality traits, appear. These flashbacks cover not only cultural milestones – the arrival of Christianity, the creation of the first tavern, the first soccer game on the continent – but date back even into pre-humanity, to a set of “48 bichitos verdes” emerging from the sea on the beach near Getxo (*Las cenizas* 471). Each of these flashbacks features the exact same cast of characters, who are the 48 original “founders” of Getxo, and by extension of Basqueness. The descendants of the green sea-creatures retain the same names, occupations, personalities, and their all-important *caseríos*.

As a result, the present-day characters, who are finally facing the crises of modernity, are reincarnations – essentially the same people – as their ancestors. They thus belong to a culture that has remained unchanged since long before the dawn of humanity. Though Pinilla narrates this mythical past with tongue and cheek, he does privilege the authentic and old in his novel. He does so by juxtaposing two Getxo families that share a last name: the Baskardos and the “Baskardos de Sugarkea.” The former includes the town's wealthiest industrialists, who at times participate in nostalgic efforts to recover a mythical past that reveals just how out of touch they are with their roots; for example, they are unsure how many original founding families there were in Getxo. The Baskardos

de Sugarkea, in contrast, live isolated from the town in a wooden farmhouse speaking an archaic Euskera difficult to understand. The family, if hyperbolically portrayed in its primitivism, still acts as the keeper of genuine tradition that the nationalistic Baskardos can only crudely imitate.

Though Pinilla's drift into the past is an extreme one, instances of Basque cultural memory often conceive of the past in the *longue durée*. Evocations of a pre-war past, from the era of the Carlist wars to the Stone Age, frequently identify predecessors to contemporary culture. For example, what stands out in the PNV's narrations of Basque history, according to Manuel Montero's two convincing and well-documented essays, is the relative absence of mentions of the Civil War and Franco, which are bypassed for earlier referents. Montero demonstrates that, in PNV speeches and official writing, "[l]a historia resulta omnipresente" ("Las sagas" 741), taking on an ever-increasing importance. If references to Francoism in PNV speeches did increase in the 1980s and 1990s, "[l]as referencias a un pasado ancestral, milenario, anterior a los tiempos históricos, llegan a ser constantes y detalladas a mediados de los años noventa" ("Las sagas" 743). According to Montero, the party's ideology takes a long view of history, focusing on three "sagas": the existence of a millinery Basque culture predating history, as evidenced in science including physical anthropology, the existence of national sovereignty in the foral regimes of middle ages, and the resurrection of a Basque people with the birth of the nationalism at the end of the 19th century to the present ("Las sagas" 747).

One indicator of the presence of the distant past in Basque nationalism, in accordance with Montero's observations, is a special historical supplement permanently

linked to the front page of *Deia*, the largest daily newspaper associated with PNV ideology (*Historias de los vascos*). While many articles are dedicated to Civil War topics, with a smaller number discussing the dictatorship era and the transition, others explore earlier centuries. While the term “Memoria histórica” appears often in headlines, entirely absent from the page is the call of the Spanish left, which I have discussed the previous chapters, to restore justice to victims of war and reprisals and to identify mass graves. The phrase “recuperar la memoria” occurs in the headline of an article discussing the importance of place names and surnames as the oldest testimonies of the Basque language (Iñigo). Other articles see contemporary significance in events as far past as Sabino Arana’s life, the slaughter of Basque fishermen in 1615, or the battle of Roncesvalles.

The invocation of the past in political discourse serves the clear purpose in the writings of Arzalluz of justifying his actions as being situated within a now century-old party tradition. In his autobiography, at times the former *lehendakari* justifies many of his positions, including his internal disputes with Carlos Garaikoetxea, on the basis of the actions of *lehendakari* José Antonio Aguirre (169), or the lessons learned from the impact that previous transitional governments such as the Cádiz Cortes (1810-1814) had on regional autonomy (175). In PNV ideology the past serves to defend the legitimacy of Basque self-rule through the reinterpretation of the *fueros* as a pact between sovereign peoples.

Perhaps more importantly, such references serve to distinguish Basque culture (as being particularly old) and to root it as authentic, as the product of an ancient natural evolution rather than a recent construction. A common point in the dominant theories of

nationalism of the last decades (Hobsbawm and Ranger; Gellner; Smith) is that the age of a cultural practice confers it greater legitimacy, that the age of a nation, scientifically verifiable or not, lends it greater authenticity. The purpose of the “invented tradition,” the “set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature,” as Hobsbawm and Ranger have famously perceived it, is “to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1). Romanticism’s association of the old, the original, and the authentic in my view continues to resonate in western cultures, as David Cannadine demonstrates in his study of the British monarchs’ ceremonial pageantry.

I will not be the first to point out the importance attributed by both outsiders and Basques themselves to the ancient origins of Basque identity, and of their continued legacy still visible in the rural environment. The phenomenon is summarized excellently in anthropologist Jeremy MacClancey’s study “Biology.” MacClancey documents the turn-of-the-century nationalist movement’s seizing of the craniological fossil records to argue for an *in situ* cultural/biological evolution of Basques since the era of the Cro-Magnon, the subsequent distancing of Basques from race-based understandings of identity, and the sometimes factually manipulative insistence of anti-nationalist politicians in branding nationalists as racists.

Typifying outsiders’ fascination with the (supposed) stone-age origins of Basque culture, in an episode of the television documentary *Around the World with Orson Welles*, Welles asserts that:

According to [Basque man], Adam and Eve were pure Basque. And it’s true that he’s positioned something like the red Indians in America. He’s an aboriginal. In Europe before the other Europeans came along. To this day he speaks his own weird language, a tongue no expert has ever been

able to trace.

Welles's claim is supported in his film with displays of "primitive" customs, such as the *irrintzi*, a high-pitched war cry that is now most often heard in songs or celebrations. If Welles offers a stereotyped view of the Basque Country, and a partial one (for he focuses exclusively on small village life), notions of Basques as aboriginals appear frequently in self-descriptive cultural production as well. This occurs even though the continuity of culture, or even inhabitation of the current Basques and the Paleolithic and Neo-Paleolithic people whose bones have been uncovered, is impossible to prove with the current evidence. Moreover, as MacClancey points out, "it is extremely unlikely that [the] early inhabitants" of the current Basque area could have regarded themselves as Basque (115).

Still, in many instances of cultural production, Basques continue to equate the old – whether pre-industrial or prehistoric, with their culture. It may be said generally that nationalism seeks out "the memories, symbols, myths and traditions of 'the people', embodied above all in the rustic folk and their arts, customs and mores" (Smith 69), and that nationalism, given its wide-spread support, plays an important role in shaping the image of Basque identity.

Perhaps the age of Euskera, as a pre-Indo-European language that survived the waves of invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and the spread of Romance languages across continental Western Europe, pushes sense of origin of Basque culture further back in time. According to Joseba Zulaika, "In their prehistoric imagination, Basques intimately associate their non-Indo-European language with such archeological evidences" as found in caves like Urtiaga, near his native town Itziar (3). Thus, he writes, "Basques have a

close relationship with their mythical past . . . in conversations with Basques it is not unusual to hear ‘that happened only 5,000 B.C.’” (7).

In this vein, in writing displaying sympathy to cultural *vasquismo*, Iñaki Egaña’s compilation of historical anecdotes and legends reiterates the contiguity between an ancient past and present. For example, Egaña uncritically reports on an archeologist’s discovery in 1932 of a bone wind instrument, which he dubbed “*txistu de la cueva de Isturiz*” and labeled “el instrumento musical más antiguo de la humanidad” (13). The implication is that the *txistu* played today in folk music has an ancestor in prehistory. Similarly, Egaña prefaces the story of Andrés Jiménez, who returned to his cave-dwelling in Sesma, Navarra, after a 50-year absence, with the explanation “Desde la prehistoria, los vascos han vivido ininterrumpidamente en cuevas, masivamente antes del comienzo de la historia y ya excepcionalmente en épocas más cercanas” (13). In another linking of present customs to prehistoric time, sculptor Jorge Oteiza famously compares his own work with negative spaces in sculpture to his megalithic ancestors’ constructions of stone circles or cromlech.

Depictions of rural customs stemming from preindustrial past as emblematic of Basque culture, that is, the uses of the aesthetic of *costumbrismo*, are far too numerous to list here. I may cite as an example, the documentary film *Guipuzkoa* (1979), which was directed by Pío Caro Baroja and written by his brother Julio Caro Baroja. The bulk of the film, much of it featuring folk-music as its soundtrack, is dedicated to showing traditional customs, such as dances, or occupations, such as non-mechanized farming. Most often, Caro Baroja does not indicate whether the scenes depicted have been staged for the documentary. In the film, the few examples of modern practices are shown as adaptations

of tradition. For example, according to the narrator, the wooden sculpture of avant-garde artist Nestor Basterretxea “procura ilustrar las concepciones mitológicas cosmogónicas del viejo folclore vasco.” Even a passage on the province’s industrial metallurgy, following shots of a modern facility, points out that iron-ore mining dates centuries back, and includes a re-enactment of work in a pre-industrial metal forge with workers clad in burlap, leather, and wool.

I do not wish to dismiss insistences on the survival of the old in Basque culture into the present as the mere product of what Justin Crumbaugh neatly summarizes as “a certain ideological fantasy about Basques as people that possess an inherent distinctiveness still clearly conserved in the countryside,” to be exploited by the rural “heritage” tourism industry (85). It is true that Basque nationalism has, like other national identitary movements, produced examples of folklorism and of harkening back to a “golden age.” It has been argued many times by historians (for example Corcuera Atienza 225) that the PNV, since its origins, as Zulaika puts it, created “a mythical model to set against the negative aspects of industrialization around Bilbao” (134-5). At the same time, the case for Euskera as a link to prehistory, even if arguably manipulated for certain ideological ends, is not based entirely on fantasy. As MacClancy careful asserts, even if “any attempt to link Euskera to notions of specifically Basque or even ur-Basque ethnicity” is scientifically “problematic,” the existence of the language “does suggest the continued existence of a group (or groups) of people who, at the very least, maintained the linguistic aspect of their cultural inheritance over several thousand years” (100).

Furthermore, given the relatively recent urbanization of much of Spain, including parts of the Basque Country, and the relatively late spread of electronic mass media, the

representation of a disappearing the rural world and of traditional modes of entertainment/cultural expression in many cases may be said to reflect firsthand experience rather than ideological nostalgia. Bernardo Atxaga, for example, in an article on the basis of his fictional town of *Obaba*, writes that

Antiguo era, ciertamente, el lugar que conocí en mi niñez; antiguos eran, en general, todos los lugares que, como Extremadura, Castilla o Galicia, estaban habitados por campesinos. Naturalmente, ya no lo son. Cuando se impusieron la televisión y otros aparatos, el pasado, lo que de él había sobrevivido, se deshizo con rapidez, como una tela vieja.

Es raro pensarlo, pero los que nacimos antes de 1960 hemos podido ser testigos de la desaparición de una forma de pensar y de vivir que, en más de un aspecto, llevaba miles de años sobre la tierra. (“Obaba”)

Atxaga cites as an example the childhood games he used to play in his hometown of Asteasu, a version of which he was surprised to see represented in the Roman mosaics excavated from Pompey.

According to Joseba Zulaika (born 1948), in the rural village of his youth, even as production modes rapidly changed and agricultural occupations were increasingly abandoned, certain cultural practices and the systems of symbolic understandings of ones surrounding remained intact from previous generations. During his field work in Itziar (1979-1981) oral tales and the beliefs they entail remained in circulation, their currency devalued, but not disappeared. Describing a villager named María, a popular teller of tales of “Mari, witchcraft metamorphoses, and legendary figures,” Zulaika writes that

By the fifties [her] esoteric world was already obsolete. Each household harbored in secrecy any disgraceful complicity with such an outmoded worldview. . . . As I grew older and inquired into my own family’s history, it was easy to discover significant contacts with such beliefs and practices. . . . María’s kontuak were for us the equivalent of fairy tales. Yet they were “true” in that she told them as autobiographical events and our parents would not deny the actual reality of such happenings. . . . Although no longer “real” for adult generations, María’s storytelling offered us significant access to their mental configuration. (4-5)

Zulaika, who, as I have mentioned above, is well aware of the instrumentalization of the countryside as symbol and reservoir of authenticity, documents the continued importance of the *baserria* or traditional farmstead in the 1970s and early 1980s in both self-perception of Basque identity in general and that of the rural population. At the time of Zulaika's study, 10 percent of Basques were farmers (10), but in his own Itziar, 128 of 184 households were working *baserriak* (105). According to the anthropologist, the non-inheriting children raised on *baserriak*, after abandoning rural occupations, still considered themselves *baserritar*. For many of them, the "waning strength of his own original roots" led to the extremist belief that "[o]nly by virtue of a revolutionary act of liberation can he save his natal household and, by extension, himself from disgrace," (107). In summary, even if the rural world is no longer part of the vast majority of Basques' day-to-day existence, it is not spurious to represent rural culture as having shaped the worldview of a number of Basques, and as having until recently dictated the ways in which Basque made a living, found entertainment, or interacted with others.

The continued decline of the rural population and traditional agrarian economy, and the ever-growing distance from traditional cultural practices (as well as the evolving exigencies of their discipline) have surely played a part in leading anthropology away from the small community ethnographic studies of José María Barandiarán and Julio Caro Baroja. The table of contents of Zulaika and William Douglass's textbook *Basque Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* reflects not only the chronological documentation of a subject but also shift in interest and methodology. Studies of the fishing industry, *baserri* culture, rural sexual mores, and folklore and mythology give way to chapters on tourism, new Basque music, and modern artists and authors. Anthropology, as a means of

self-understanding that can be consumed by a highly literate population, has sought more current objects of analysis than the isolated, marginalized, “little community” (16). For, as Iñaki Iriarte López points out, the worldview expressed in the past customs of Basques can only seem exotic to a now urbanized population. The custom in Leitza of solemnly announcing a townsman’s death to the inhabitants of his beehive “nos parece extraída de un documental sobre alguna tribu perdida de África” (63).

What is to replace the roles such customs played in marking a differentiated culture? I may make two observations about contemporary performance/expression of Basque culture: their greater degree of self-consciousness and their displacement onto the symbolic. For Iriarte, a rather superficial set of “signos y lugares” have arisen to combat the “olvido” of an originary past (63). The majority of Basques no longer live in baserris or play the txistu, or even know much about their rural ancestors’ (real or imagined) customs (63), but with “meros signos externos” – wearing lauburus, naming children “Unax,” knowing which food is Basque – invoke a difference that was once more pronounced (63-4).

The pattern of disappearing local practices and their replacement with self-conscious codes of ethnic expression is not new, nor is the criticism that such codes are inauthentic. Already in 1891, four years before the founding of the PNV, Unamuno published *La sangre de Aitor*, a mocking parody of the foralist literature that imagined a mythical past borrowing much of its content from Romantics like Walter Scott. For Jon Juaristi, foralist literature and thought, which is generally accepted as a *vasquista* forerunner of cultural nationalism, was a response to that time period’s “deterioro” of “vinculaciones orgánicas” to traditional society (*Aitor* 16).

But the acceleration of globalization and free exchange of commodities and culture, acute in Spain with its rapid economic growth and integration into Europe dating to late-Francoism, has spurred unprecedented homogenization. Joan Ramon Resina, following the anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis, notes “the vanishing of tastes, aromas, and textures from the contemporary European margins. . . . [T]he market’s drive toward integration entails a massive every-day intervention in the everyday cultures of the European periphery, determining what regional varieties of basic products, including food staples, can be grown, marketed, and exported” (“Short of Memory” 94). As anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy has documented, in the Basque case, the disappearance of food commodities, which can be linked to both ecological and economic changes have transformed Basque cuisine actually and conceptually. Basque cuisine functions not as a description of day-to-day diet – which is increasingly similar to that of other Europeans – but as a “constructed category” shaped in part by politicians, celebrity chefs, cook books, and a new breed of folkloric cider-house restaurants. The assertion of difference, the resistance to what Max Pensky describes as the specter of “bad” globalization, a “standardized Euroculture offered as the regulatory compensation for obsolete national characters, which live on only in the pallid form of commodities for mass tourism” (viii) is thus displaced increasingly onto the symbolic.

I do not by this mean that cultural differentiation based on narrative and naming is somehow less authentic or real, much less the result, as Juaristi would have it, of stupidity or even collective mental illness. As Anthony Smith points out, “cultural elements are as much part of social reality as any material or organizational factors; indeed, social reality is inconceivable outside of symbolism” (25). As Gellner asserts, humorously using the

motif of nations with navels to describe their ancient, organic birth versus their invention, most nations have identifiable moments of deliberate creation: “Those possessed of genuine ones are probably in the minority, but it matters little. It is the need for navels engendered by modernity that matters” (101).

What matters for the current study, at any rate, is not identity and nationhood as a matter of “authenticity,” but rather of self-perception, which depends on strategies of constructing a communal past, including the two I have discussed above. The two strategies – seeing the Civil War as invasion, and seeing Basque culture as ancient – invoke separate categories of Braudel’s *durées* but are in my view among the most important ones in shaping Basque identity in text. They invoke representations of Basques as resistant, as marginalized, as marked by violence, as the indigene. As I hope to have shown, and will expose at greater length in the following chapters, the two scripts, highly problematic and debated in Basque culture, serve as departure points for literary inquiry, which further problematize them. Basque novels that reference them play with narratives in which keys to defining a local identity are at stake.

4

BASQUE NARRATIVE:
FOUNDATIONALISM AND LITERARY AUTONOMY

No hace falta que nadie me haga la autocrítica: me la hago yo solo.

Jorge Semprún
Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez

4.1. Introduction

Basque literature of memory uses as raw material two over-determined, fought-over symbols: first, as I have outlined in the last chapter, the shared past, which is so often seen as constituent of identity; secondly, Euskera, the vernacular language of the novels I analyze in the current chapter and the incontrovertible, though far from universally spoken, mark of difference. Most often, nationalistic identity construction falls back on these two categories as evidence of particularity, which in turn is used to support claims to sovereignty. Yet the autonomy of literature and the postmodern tendency to cast suspicion on master narratives of truth entail seeking distance from discourses constructing collective identity based on these or other factors.

In light of these tensions, in the current chapter, I propose to analyze at length three memory novels written in Basque: Koldo Izaguirre's *Metxa izeneko Agierretar baten ibili herrenak*, Kirmen Uribe's *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, and Anjel Lertxundi's *Etxeko hausta*. The selected novels are heterogeneous, but share certain features that invite their comparison. All three are set in the present of the time of their writing, but incorporate narrations of the past and show how the present is affected by those past events. These events, given varying degrees of emphasis in the three novels, include the Civil War in the Basque Country, the repression of cultural expression under Franco, and (often in the present-tense narration) the terrorism of ETA. Thus, all of the novels attempt to explain something about contemporary Basque society through the examination of past moments

of conflict; conflict not always in unity against the outside, but conflict within Basque society itself. The three novels feature also, to varying degrees of prominence, metafictional structures used to reflect upon the creation of historical narratives. Such structures quite deliberately show that narrations of the past – which are central to the books' protagonists' way of understanding the present – are often unreliable.

Before analyzing these novels, I must stress the boldness of playing with memory of the past in the context of Basque literature and culture – the boldness, though perhaps, ultimately, need, to act irreverently with the symbols of Basque identity. The most canonical of the contemporary Basque language writers, with the exception of the younger Kirmen Uribe, became active at the end of the Franco period, when all expressions of peripheral culture were seen as forms of resistance to dictatorship. Their own descriptions of why they wrote, and why they wrote in Basque, paint them as cultural activists engaged in the project of constructing a Basque literature (Etxeberria). Given the history of Basque literature, their task was doubly foundational: first, to create institutions, a canon, and examples of successful cultural products after the imposed silence of the Franco years; and, secondly, to establish for the first time a literary language from a tongue not standardized until the 1960s. Their works were published by newly created publishing houses born with the same aim, and, during the democracy, with regional government subsidies and promotion aimed at reviving Euskera.¹⁵ Such

¹⁵ The weight of institutional spending on Basque literature is often addressed in criticism of Basque literature, though its influence is a controversial matter. There is currently no in-depth study on the economics of the Basque literary system in English or in Spanish. In Basque, Idurre Alonso has written a study entitled *Euskal literatur sistema eta literaturaren didaktika aztergai* on the relationship between Basque literature and public education. Joan Mari Torrealdei has written an oft-cited work on book publishing in Basque. Based on my own observations, the extent of direct government subsidy is often exaggerated. For the majority of the Democratic period it has been limited to a single literary prize for authors and the purchase of approximately 500 copies of books in Euskera to be held at municipal libraries (Elzaburu).

writers, by using the language, though not necessarily describing themselves as nationalists, shored up the prestige of a key ingredient of Basque culture. These circumstances might suggest that writers would be disposed to celebrations of Basque culture and difference. And yet, from the beginning, even if such writers would seemingly have found natural allies in nationalism and its adherents, they sought to undermine identity myths.

They did so using as raw material what nearly every theory of nationalism sees as a key ingredient in nation-building processes. For Ernest Gellner, for example, the transition to the technology-based nation-state requires the creation of a common tongue that makes economic production possible, which in turn requires standardization through apparatuses like public education. For Benedict Anderson, the existence of a “print community” – a community called into existence, and made aware of its existence through the use of a common language in literature, media, and schooling – fosters a belief in national identity. Josep Llobera emphasizes the strength of affective attachment to one’s language, going so far as to suggest that “language . . . is one of the key nationalitarian markers, if not the key one” (85). Even in nations without a widely spoken distinctive language, such as Ireland and Scotland (which at any rate do speak unique varieties of English), “the symbolic value” of the vernacular tongues to “national identity . . . should not be underestimated” (Llobera 86).

Though the majority of Basques favor or do not oppose government protection of Euskera,¹⁶ the debate over Basque identity often centers on the question of language use and linguistic public policy. Paddy Woodworth has adeptly described the “politico-

¹⁶ One study found that at the end of the last millennium 46 percent of the population favored (32 percent) or strongly favored (14 percent) promotion of the language while 38 percent said they neither favored nor disfavored it (Herrerias 101).

linguistic minefields” (*The Basque Country* 10) that must be navigated even in speaking and spelling local toponyms. As Benjamín Tejerina summarizes, “al ser uno de los símbolos centrales de la identidad colectiva vasca [la lengua] se ha convertido en objeto de disputa política” (110). Still, Tejerina asserts that non-nationalists increasingly “se están incorporando progresivamente a esta definición del nosotros mediante el aprendizaje de la lengua,” forging a new relationship between language and identity not based on nationalism (101). Dating from late Francoism/the transition, Basque writers have been at the forefront of the disentangling of language and nationalism.

Euskera’s relative lack of literary antecedents would seemingly increase the pressure on writers to ally themselves with nationalist political programs that would protect and promote artistic expression in the language. Unlike Castilian or the two largest of the peripheral romance languages, Catalan and Galician, Basque was not employed as a written administrative language and saw rather isolated, occasional use in literature.¹⁷ The first known book in Basque, Bernard Etxepare’s *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae*, a collection of mostly religious poetry by a priest from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, was not published until 1545, in Bordeaux. Until the nineteenth century, literary production in Basque existed but was far from abundant, and almost exclusively limited to religious texts (Mujika 9). Luis Mitxelena asserted in 1960 that if Basque oral literary production compared favorably to that of other languages, “La literatura culta es por el contrario tardía, escasa y en conjunto de no muy alta calidad” (11). Mitxelena’s deprecating assessment serves as evidence that post-Franco authors saw themselves as forging a new tradition starting from next to nothing. The author interviews in Hasier

¹⁷ For a history of Basque literature, see Mitxelena, Juaristi *Literatura vasca*, Urkizu, Aldekoa, Muxica, Ametzaga, and *BasqueLiterature.com*.

Etxeberria's book share this sense, with the notable exception of Bernardo Atxaga.¹⁸

Basque language authors typically see little to rescue from their canon. As Hasier Etxeberria states, some authors have seen reading pre-twentieth-century writing as an obligatory "vía crucis" to be passed (322). Ramon Saizarbitoria, for example, has said, "Nuestra tradición me resultaba aburrida y pesada. . . . [E]n la mayoría de los casos se trata de textos publicados con pretensiones no muy literarias (Etxeberria 119). Koldo Izaguirre has put it plainly that Axular's book "El Gero [Después], el libro clásico por excelencia según los historiadores, no sirve" (Etxeberria 268). In fact, Izaguirre surmises, "nuestros autores clásicos, los compiladores, los que establecen las normas – es decir, los curas – han dejado al euskera prácticamente invalidado para la literatura en determinados momentos. . . ." (Etxeberria 266).

The frequent reflection on the need to build a suitable literary language (for example Izaguirre's comments in Etxeberria, Lertxundi in his essay *Vida y otras dudas*) is symptomatic of a literature with few predecessors. Lertxundi, for example, has stressed the need of Basque writers to fight off the influence of the bureaucratically produced administrative Basque (*Vida* 24) and to develop, with the help of translation, such basic written set phrases as alternatives to the equivalent of "he said" (*Vida* 51-2).

The scale of Basque literature would also seem to place pressure on authors to produce content of ideology pleasing to its most likely consumers, ethnic Basques and nationalists. Writers such as Lertxundi inhabit what Deleuze and Guattari term a "narrow

¹⁸ Atxaga has said that he found in what Hasier Etxeberria called "nuestros clásicos," that is, in works by writers such as Pedro Agerre Axular (1556-1644) and Juan de Asteasu (1742-1823), "un territorio enorme" (Etxeberria 322). He describes such works as playing a formative role in his development as a writer because they showed him that "había otros tipos de euskera, que escribir y hablar son cosas distintas, que la poesía tiene sus propios instrumentos . . ." (Etxeberria 322). Joseba Sarrionandia also reports reading authors such as Etxepare, Axular, and Mogel "con gusto" (32).

space” (16), with few predecessors to follow and a reduced circle of colleagues and readers, so that each work occupies a disproportionately wide space in the Basque literary system. Although literature in Basque is not a case of a “minor literature” according to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept,¹⁹ it can be argued that because of its small size it shares some of its characteristics. These include the frequent political and collective nature of fiction. In a minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari write, “Precisely because talents do not abound . . . the conditions are not given for an individuated utterance which would be that of some ‘master’ and could be separated from collective utterance. . . what the solitary writer says already constitutes a communal action, and what he says or does is necessarily political – even if others do not agree with him” (17). Deleuze and Guattari’s point finds echo in Françoise Paré’s exegesis on what he terms exiguous literatures, those that are marginalized because they are written in a non-dominant language, such as the Franco-Ontarian texts on which he especially focuses: “the smaller the group, the more openly political the writer’s role, although these ties are not always desired. Writers’ political acts, whether they like it or not, are often demanded by readers themselves” (27). Kortazar has also reached the same conclusion of Basque literature by focusing, like Paré, on the reading demands of small groups:

[I]deology is the large determinate umbrella within which all literary creation moves about. However, ideology holds even more influence in minoritized systems because their small size results in a higher level of sensitivity within social circles. Like a nervous neuron that jumps more quickly and intensely, a minoritized literary system possesses a greater capacity for immediate responses which can also disappear fleetingly. (“Tensions” 135)

The collective, political needs of Basque culture to have an established literature spurred

¹⁹ The term is defined as “[t]he literature a minority makes in a major language” (Deleuze and Guattari 16).

writers into action, and very likely had some influence on their writing. Saizarbitoria has stated plainly that he started writing in Euskera from a sense of cultural nationalism:

Para entender eso es preciso referirnos al nacionalismo. Parece que Valentín de Berriotxo decía, “Quiero ser un santo para que un santo tenga Vizcaya.” Lo mío fue algo parecido. Para escribir o hacer teatro, para hacer cualquier cosa en euskera uno no tenía por qué ser escritor o actor. . . . uno no usurpaba ningún lugar puesto que no había verdaderos escritores o actores . . . la cultura en euskera era un desierto. . . . había que hacer un trabajo de relleno. (Etxeberria 99)

Yet, Basque literature of the last 50 years has not been held hostage by the needs of cultural patriotism, political nationalism, and government institutions. Rather, it has been tugged upon by opposing currents. According to Olaziregi, the pull exerted by cultural militarism is no longer as strong as in the past, as market forces play a greater role in writing style and reader taste:

Es . . . de destacar la decreciente influencia que la institución literaria vasca (escuela, universidad, premios literarios, instituciones oficiales de promoción literaria . . .) tiene en los hábitos lectores de los vascos y en su gusto literario. Es obvio que hemos pasado de una escritura que respondía al objetivo político de construir Nación hasta bien entrado el siglo XX, hasta casi la década de los años 1960 para ser mas precisos, a una escritura en euskara donde la elección de la lengua literaria no conlleva una opción política exclusivamente nacionalista. Recientes investigaciones sociológicas muestran que son los factores relacionados con el mercado (campanas de promoción, medios de comunicación, premios . . .) los que más incidencia tienen a la hora de determinar el consumo literario vasco. (“Narrativa vasca”)

She has gone so far as to refer to the group of authors born after 1950 as “la generación de la autonomía literaria” (“Luces y sombras” 126).

While I believe Olaziregi’s assessment is accurate, the temporal proximity of the nation-building phase of literature means that its effects are still being felt. The older generations of contemporary authors very deliberately had to choose to distance themselves from political writing; this means that the poetics of nation-building affected

their work, even if by offering a model *not* to follow. In other words, the link between cultural construction (supported by government funding and the purchases of Basquist readers), remains strong. As Kortazar points out, Basques have sometimes criticized writers' use of Spanish for literature, but not for "less symbolic" formats such as journalism ("Tensions" 138). The novel and poetry, privileged literary forms completely dependent on language, in the Basque case a language central to identity, may be held up as examples of the language's and identity's value and legitimacy.

Yet, the effectiveness of Basque literature as a means of cultural construction depends on its quality, or in less subjective terms, its appeal to Basque, Spanish (as the most common first language of translation), and international audiences and critics. If a literary work is to generate meaningful interaction with the reader, as in Wolfgang Iser's model, it cannot simply affirm an ideology comforting to him or her. Literature in Iser's view depends up on a degree of "indeterminacy" that in the case of small literatures may undermine the solidity necessary for foundational fiction. Novels of overt national constructionism like the first ones written in Basque by authors such as Domingo Aguirre (1864-1920) or José Manuel Etxeita (1842-1915) have lost their ability to propel Basque culture. Neither "el rancio costumbrismo" nor "la visión idealizada y tradicionalista" (Olaziregi, "Recuperación" 1032) of these novels, it is safe to say, currently hold sufficient cultural prestige, though the image of the rural Arcadia does retain some currency. The needs of literary representation, as a means of investigation, as a means of discomforting readers, run against those of ethno-nationalist affirmation.

Pulling Basque literature in one direction, to summarize, is the need for autonomy described in Joseba Sarrionandia's comments on post-Franco literature and the *Pott*

group's aim to avoid the instrumentalization of literature for political ends: "se propuso la autonomía de la literatura, la literatura no era el altavoz de la reivindicaciones o de la ideologías. La literatura tenía su modo y su fuerza, y unas cualidades específicas para la percepción crítica del mundo" (Etxeberria 38). Pulling it in another direction are the continued needs of cultural construction and the support of fellow travelers in that project. Atxaga offers a nuanced description of this bind:

He podido observar que hay escritores que minimizan el lado político de la literatura escrita en euskera, la implicación de su obra en la construcción nacional (lo sé muy bien, porque yo soy, o he sido, uno de ellos). En general, tratan de decir que ellos no se sienten nacionalistas o independistas, y que cuando escriben no piensan en la nación vasca ni en la Euskadi Independiente; pero la afirmación, en los términos en que generalmente se expresa, carece de exactitud. El ancla de la literatura vasca ha sido durante mucho tiempo la ideología identitaria en cualquiera de sus formas, sin olvidar aquella que Jaume Fuster, citando a un fraile catalán de los tiempos de Axular, llamaba "nacionismo". Sería "nacionismo" lo que George Orwell llamaba "patriotismo", amor por lo propio y, sobre todo, defensa de lo propio ante la agresión. ("El corcho y el ancla")

The paradoxical nature of this tension makes its acting out in literature all the more fascinating: the ability of literature to further nationalism or nationism depends on its very ability to surpass and separate itself from the ideology of nationalism.

Kortazar summarizes this tension convincingly:

Basque literary society . . . lies between a postmodern literary practice and an intensely identitarian political practice. . . . I could . . . mention . . . [postmodern] elements present in current literary practice, including the representation of weak subjects, heterotopic spaces and temporal confusion, metafiction, pastiche, parody, the impossibility of accessing and therefore, telling the truth, polyphony, and pop culture. At the same time, there is a strong identity-affirming message present in Basque Society. ("Tensions" 145)

Ramón Zallo puts it more forlornly, in a volume aimed at proposing policy in support of Basque culture: "El drama de la cultura vasca, de la cultura de todos los vascos, es que

para cuando han surgido algunas de las condiciones políticas de su rescate y renovación, el mundo y la noción misma de cultura ya habían cambiado” (161).

The novels I examine in this chapter dialogue incisively with the discourses of national affirmation based on memory that I exposed in the previous chapter: retellings of the primordial past and of the Civil War and its legacy of continued clashes on the question of autonomy. The three novels are narrated clearly enough from within Basque culture, cast no doubt on its existence, and are written by authors who have worked to construct its institutions. Yet, they are not celebratory of Basque difference, for they directly counter the alleged myths of nationalism, such as the unity of the Basque nation in resistance to outside threats. They focus often on internal divisions and the more troubled aspects of Basque life. For example, in the case of Izaguirre and Uribe’s works, they undermine the myth of Basque identity as being defined by the rural and the old. Aguirre, the protagonist of Izaguirre’s novel may have his origins in a *caserío* and live in a small town, but he cannot drive a tractor in a straight line. Uribe’s work constructs technology-based connections to other parts of the globe, breaking his country’s isolation and emphasizing similarity to other places, and embracing the new. Lertxundi’s investigation of his generation’s relationship with terrorist violence calls for an uncomfortable examination of conscience.

As these novels show, Basque literature often opposes the centralistic narratives of nation that would erase local difference, but call into question counter-narratives that reproduce the greater ones on a small scale. In this vein, Sarrionandia calls for critical thinking and self-criticism to combat the “ley del más fuerte” and “Pensamiento Único” it spawns and counter-discourses of resistance that imitate them:

En contra de ese Pensamiento Único, se han vuelto unos pequeños pensamientos únicos, y los vascos también tenemos los nuestros, y hemos de admitir – no somos tan diferentes – que en nuestros marcos también son escasos el pensamiento crítico, la autocrítica y otros valores.
(Etxeberria 55)

It is precisely the elements of self-criticism in Basque novels that I will point out. It is a self-criticism all the more paradoxical in novels of historical memory, because memory can serve to create the bonds of a common past, project the group as a stable entity over time, discover origins, and identify normative values.

The past recalled in many Basque novels, however, is often not a foundational moment, in the same sense as in the historical romances Doris Summer analyzes, which explain the nature of a people. The three novels I will analyze represent confluences of such origin narratives with reminders, through different strategies, that the question of identity has no definite answer. In Koldo Izaguirre's novel, the Civil War serves as a legitimator of resistance to centralism, but also, paradoxically, as a legitimator of continued resistance to the strategies of resistance to centralism. Narratives of the past in the work are furthermore unreliable or even transparently false inventions. In Uribe's novel, the war is simultaneously a reminder of how a Basque world was lost, and of the conflict among Basques. Identity – at least for the narrator – lies equally in search for origins and in tracing connections to other cultures, as in those origins. In Lertxundi's work, the past of separatist confrontation, in part a backlash to the war, remains unsettled and unusable as a cultural foundation, returning violently, and requiring an examination that eludes monological explanations of it.

4.2. De-collectivity and Anti-foundation

I begin the analysis of my selection of novels with a brief preface on a fourth: Juan Luis Zabala's novel *Galdu arte* (*Until Failure*; 1996, translated into Spanish as *Hasta la derrota siempre*). The novel illustrates, perhaps better than any other, what occurs frequently in Basque fictional works: the representation of a collectivity divided and of the will to rupture away from anti-centralistic programs of rupture. Set in the town of Azkoitia, the novel engages convincingly the world of disillusioned, radical "post-punk" youth in rural Guipuzkoa. The novel, which Olaziregi, in a brief review calls "una obra amena, viva, contada con gran dinamismo y acierto estilístico" ("Un siglo" 549) was well received, having been printed in ten editions in Basque and in one Spanish translation by 1999 (Sáenz de Viguera 271). However, it appears to be little known among readers who do not know Euskera and to my knowledge has received little critical attention beyond a chapter in Luis Sáenz de Viguera doctoral dissertation.

The novel focuses exclusively on the early democratic period through structures of memory. The narrator, Nico, having told the magazine *Interviú* about his recently deceased friend and cousin Shepe, recalls Shepe's life. As with other novels of memory, *Galdu arte* rescues an unofficial, "truer" narration of the past, one which corrects or expands upon an official version. The narrator, apparently regretting his descriptions of Shepe to the journalist, dedicates the novel to explaining his cousin and the world of Azkoitia youth, filling in what is sure to be left out in the article.

Galdu arte proffers not a traditional sense of identity but a (post)modern one of rupture and crisis. I invoke these terms in the sense that Calinescu uses them to describe the aesthetic of modernity which "comes to oppose concepts without which it would have been inconceivable – concepts such as . . . reason, progress, science . . . – . . . pursuing

its deepest vocation, its constitutive sense of creation through rupture and crisis” (92).

The ideology of the book’s youth (which is closely tied to the aesthetic and position taking of the punk rock music to which they listen) follows this pattern. The characters accept that they are something other than Spanish, but reject all orthodox brands of national particularism, fighting against all stable discourses of identity.

Set in a Basque-speaking location with strong nationalist sympathies, *Galduta* represents almost exclusively characters who explicitly or implicitly favor independence or autonomy for the Basque Country. Even the local representative of authority by force, the municipal police *sargento* Roberto, is quick to distinguish himself from the Spanish national Guardia Civil, crying “Yo no soy policía, ¿me has oído? . . . soy alguacil, estoy al servicio de los vecinos. . . . ¡ . . . soy abertzale!”²⁰ (175-6).

Yet, the youth who comprise the novel’s main characters, having no definite idea of what it means to be Basque, are unsatisfied with the brand of non-conformity to which the older generations of the town conform. Rather than subscribe to the ideology of one of the dominant nationalist parties, they vigorously reject political programs, especially that of the conservative PNV, as clashing with their ideals of anarchy and self-rule. The youths debate and feel out their stances on the Basque question rather than adopting any definite position.

Their debates come to a head in a group argument (180-3) over heroin and the state of the Basque Country. Representing the two sides of the argument are Joseba, the one adherent to a party (leftist nationalist) ideology, and the protagonist Shepe. A selection of quotations from their argument will illustrate the range of the positions the characters express, and their tendency to rupture away from the institutionalized

²⁰ Basque term meaning patriot, and containing nationalist connotations.

programs of rupture from the Spanish state.

For Joseba, “hijoputa es el que está en contra de Euskal Herria. . . . Quien está en contra de Euskal Herria, del euskara y de los presos vascos” (181). He proclaims that Basque-speaking socialists and PNV members deserve a measure of his respect because “Son de los nuestros al fin y al cabo” (182).

The majority of the youths, however, do not see nationalist adherence in and of itself as proof of allegiance to their own little-defined goals: “yo conozco hijoputas bien hijoputas que están a favor de Euskal Herria y del euskara,” one of them says. For the protagonist, Shepe, the Basque Country is just as much of a target for his rage as Spain. He intervenes in the argument by singing “A la mierda el País Vasco” by the Biscayan punk rock band Eskorbuto, appropriating the band’s expression of blanket hatred and sense of alienation from institutionalized nationalism (182).

The youths of *Galdu arte* are caught between political ideologies that fail to understand them or to provide a program in accord with their sentiments. Joseba’s more-or-less institutionalized left-nationalism does not sway them; progressive Spanish society, represented by the magazine *Interviu* takes little interest in listening to them, preferring to see them as part of a homogenous, nationalist block. Nico, at the end of the argument over Basqueness that I have cited above, concludes that Shepe and his world will fall outside the magazine writer’s comprehension:

Desde pequeños, hemos hablado siempre en euskera, y siempre lo hemos tenido en nuestro entorno, al menos a nivel oral. Probablemente por eso nunca hemos sido ardientes euskaltzales,²¹ y nuestro rechazo al abertzalismo también habrá tenido algo que ver con eso, aunque en ese punto hay que tener en cuenta otros factores: su traducción habitual a las lenguas contiguas, “patriotismo”, por ejemplo. La cuestión es que no quiero ni pensar en las conclusiones que habrían sacado los periodistas de

²¹ Lover of the Basque language.

Interviú si les hubiera hablado de estas conversaciones nuestras. (183)

The novel must be contextualized, as does Sáenz de Viguera, within the milieu it represents, the “cultura radical vasca” of the 1980s, and its associated “Basque radical rock,” a group of aggressively politicized bands playing punk, ska, and heavy metal, such as Eskorbuto, La Polla Records, and Kortatu.²² Shepe is “el personaje límite más radical que lo radical [que] escucha en momentos puntuales canciones de La polla records y RIP para poder expresar su frustración ante el choque continuo con los límites de lo social, incluso en lo radical, o cita a Eskorbuto para irritar con su mensaje y el castellano a abertzales monológicos” (Sáenz de Viguera 172). Such violent backlash against all “totalizing tendencies of hegemonic narratives” (Sáenz de Viguera iv) define not just the cultural moment of radical youth culture, however. The urge of fictional characters to break from dominant ideologies of Basque society recurs in Basque film and fiction, as with the protagonists of *La muerte de Mikel*, *The Accordionist’s Son*, or Saizarbitoria’s *El huerto de nuestros antepasados* (2001).

Memory in *Galdú arte* spans a relatively short time period that begins in the democratic period, so that narratives of ancestral roots are given little attention. Origin narratives have lost their relevance in the view of the Azkoita youth. But what of those novels of broader scope that do inquire into the origins of Basque culture? Do the periods prior to the postmodern (or post-punk) moments of the democracy still hold the aura of foundational moments? The novels analyzed in this chapter (*Missteps of an Aguirre named Mecha*, *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, and *Dirty Laundry*), do not propose the same radical break from the past as *Until Failure*. The past, though not always welcome, is far too present in these books. But like *Galdú arte*, they show no inclination to idealize the

²² See Douglass and Zulaika 437-42 on Basque radical rock.

past, which is sometimes shown as marred by conflict, sometimes made of hazy material, and sometimes best relinquished. Nor do the novels rescue communal normative values, often favoring instead a protagonist's break from group life.

The first novel I will examine, *Malandanzas*, like *Galdu arte*, features an individualistic protagonist who sets himself against all political programs, even those of resistance. The novel, has to my knowledge received no critical studies in Spanish or English. Its author, Koldo Izagirre, however, is often cited among the leading figures active in the transition period, having founded the short-lived literary magazine *Ustela* along with Bernardo Atxaga (Olaziregi, "Un siglo de novela" 579), though he is given secondary importance behind figures such as like Atxaga, Lertxundi, or Saizarbitoria. He is perhaps best known for his 1984 novel *Euzkadi merezi zuten* (translated into Spanish as *Merecieron un país llamado Euzkadi*), "una recreación estilística sugerente y barroca" (Olaziregi, "Un siglo de novela" 580), describing the beginning of the Civil War in the Basque Country.

With the Civil War resurfacing occasionally but repeatedly in the traumatized memory of the protagonist, *Las Malandanzas de un Aguirre llamado Mecha* questions in several ways the possibility of the war as a foundational moment of Basque resistance. It is true that the war serves to establish the protagonist Nikola Aguirre's as a fighter versus oppression. Furthermore, his reminders of what has taken place in his rural village, which the younger generations apparently ignore, vindicate memory as antidote to ongoing injustice as exemplified by the impunity of victors. At the same time, however, imagination that tends toward the darkly comic and shaky memory strip stories about the war/Francoist past of their needed solidity. Furthermore, Aguirre, a former Republican

fighter, and ultimate marginalized figure by virtue of his status as a loser, refuses to participate in his village's efforts to confront authority. Though lacking Shepe's nihilism, guided as he is by a quixotic code of principles that is never completely articulated, Aguirre rebels against every person and idea he encounters, with disregard to developing a coherent ideological program. Through irreverent wordplay, the novel further attacks the value of the institutionalized forms of resistance to central authority.

Lacking a plotline that may be easily summarized, Izaguirre's novel narrates episodically a period of the old age of Aguirre, frequently digressing into his memories or oral tales of the past. These stories range in tone but generally rely on dark, bitterly ironic humor. At times, Aguirre's dark, conflicted past, whether real or imagined by the protagonist (it is usually impossible for the reader to distinguish), pervades the main diegesis. This occurs at the end of the novel when Aguirre is interrogated by an unidentified police force about an unidentified crime that seems to have something to do with the books he possess and his having at one point protected a thief from arrest. In these scenes, Aguirre appears to be suddenly thrust back into the time of the dictatorship, his life seemingly in danger for some sort of subversive acts.

Most salient for the current study is Aguirre's stance of rupture, for which he enlists memory and invention. This stance places Aguirre, whose nickname Mecha reflects his short temper, on the side of a Basque resistance to historical oppression, but against organized programs of opposition or cultural recovery. From the onset, Izaguirre locates Mecha's personality as both inscribed in culture-specific traits, and belonging to no particular culture or geography. Aguirre, put plainly, belongs to a tribe of losers. In an explanation of what it means to be an Aguirre, on the one hand the narrator declares that

El país de los Aguirre no lo encontrarás en ningún mapa, no está en ningún lugar concreto. El país de los Aguirre está en todas partes. De hecho, la condición de Aguirre no la determinan el origen, sino el dolor de las caídas. (7)

Still, in the very next lines, Izaguirre illustrates his protagonist's struggles to remain upright and uninjured in topography, physical and cultural, specific to the Basque Country:

Alguien se descompone la rodilla al caer de las ramas de un *manzano* ajeno: he ahí un Aguirre. Otro se rompe el tobillo en la *sokamuturra*: es una forma de ser Aguirre. Y aquél se dio un golpe un el *monte* . . . : imposible negar que es un Aguirre. Y ese otro que acabó en el *río* . . . Aguirre sin lugar a dudas. (7; emphasis added)

The presence of apple trees, mountains, and rivers is not exclusive to the Basque Country, though they are found in some abundance in Gipuzkoa. However, the reference to *sokamuturra*, a festival event which involves dodging a bull with a rope tied to its horns, patrimony, at least under that name, to the Basques, makes clear where Mecha is undergoing his tumbles.

Episodes such as Aguirre's refusal to take part in protest against a town boycott of its utility company, the "Compañía Eléctrica del Norte," exemplify his rebellion from organized rebellion. The boycott adapts authoritarian tactics and thus could well be described as an example of what Sarrionandia calls a localized "pensamiento único." Most of the townspeople participate for fear of being placed on a "lista negra" (22). A group circulates at the appointed hour of the boycott – which involves simultaneously shutting off all the town's electrical devices – singing a coercive appeal to patriotism: "La calle está a oscuras, y esa cocina iluminada, No será buen vasco, el dueño de la casa" (24). Aguirre's will to resist this boycott appears to be based on both his visceral blanket antagonism and the remembrance memories of past resistances. His remark to himself,

“¡a mí me van a decir esos mocosos! ¡Como si no hubiéramos estado en listas más negras...!” (23) indicates a lifetime of countering group or state coercion.

The author’s whimsical word play to describe Aguirre’s counter-action against the electricity boycott subverts the town’s protest by illustrating the violence being imposed on the town by the protest organizers. Just as the town is completely dark, the narrator relays, “estalla una bomba en medio de la oscuridad de la plaza. Una bomba de luz: una gran lámpara se ilumina en la parte superior de la fuente, refulgiendo cada vez con más fuerza...” (24). Aguirre answers the violence implied by the expected meaning of “bomba” (bomb) with his “bomb of light,” a device that casts a non-violent, though attention-grabbing artifact.

Similar wordplay later illustrates the connection, at least in Mecha’s mind, between youth activism based on social pressure and terrorism. A group of youth, calling itself the Herria Euskalduntzeko Taldea (Asociación para la Euskaldunización del Municipio) goes by the acronym HETA, which Aguirre initially mistakes for its homonym ETA. In fact HETA’s mission is peaceful – to remove Castilian language signs and place names and replace them with Basque ones.

The HETA episode, in which the group confronts Mecha over the name of his childhood *caserío*, Casablanca, which is now occupied by Mecha’s brother Martín, illustrates the protagonist’s tendency to fight against all causes. The cause should seemingly be an agreeable one for Mecha, a monolingual Basque speaker until the age of 11. Casablanca had in fact been named Etxezuri until the postwar period, when a town employee forced the change upon threat of a fine, a fine that is enforced despite Martín’s immediate compliance with the demand (98). Still, Mecha Aguirre, who happens to

encounter the HETA group before his brother, refuses its request, invoking, by way of legitimating himself, his participating in the losing side of the Civil War. He identifies himself as “Comisario del Batallón ‘*Lenago il*’[*hasta la muerte*], condecorado por la defensa del Kalamua” (92), in reference to a mountain at the Guipuzkoa/Bizkaia border, the war front during the winter of 1936/37. Aguirre’s reaction typifies his stance – against everything, even against the enemies of his enemies – and his use of memory/invention to authorize his rebellion.

Aguirre’s practice of memory recalls one of Paul Ricoeur’s “pitfalls of memory”: the fact that recollection, as “putting-into-images,” borders on “the hallucinatory function of memory” (54). Whereas Ricoeur’s concept describes a sensory limitation, however, the protagonist appears to engage deliberately his imagination. In defense of the *caserío*’s name, Aguirre explains that it honors an uncle thought to have been killed in Casablanca in the Spanish-Moroccan war, whose son was friends with “un tabernero, Rick, que a veces le ayudaba en sus trabajos clandestinos” (95). If the allusion to the Hollywood classic is not clear enough, Aguirre allows the reader to be complicit in his policy of not letting the truth get in the way of a good story. During the confrontation he comments to himself “Menos mal que la televisión repite muchas veces algunas películas” (94), just as earlier in the novel, when challenged over another tale he remarks “Si inventar no fuera libre los trenes seguirían funcionando con vapor” (62).

The above episode is one of several in which Aguirre mixes recollection and invention by way of aggrandizing himself, as when he tells a pair of helicopter pilots that he has flown before “en un *rata* ruso, defendiendo la república de los trabajadores y los derechos de mi pueblo” (34). But if Mecha is an unreliable narrator, and his piloting

experiencing likely an invention, we know from his brother, Martín, that Mecha had served in the war on the Republican side and been incarcerated as a result. His confabulation therefore requires of memory paradoxical functions: both escapist pleasure and reminder of a factual history that is forgotten, of the lingering injustices that are legacy of the past.

As in other novels of memory *Malandanzas* includes reminders that the Civil War is not over. For example, Martín notes that the municipal employee who in the postwar had forced him to change the name of his *baserri* is alive and well and still publicly employed: “La tenéis que conocer. Sigue siendo empleada del ayuntamiento . . . Se llama Rosita” (98). It is Mecha, who insists that the past be remembered by subsequent generations who prefer to forget. For example, at one point he is barred from picking up a grand-nephew from school after informing the child’s mates that war victims were shot against the wall they use for ball playing. This stance puts him at odds with the descendants of the winners of the war, like the son of “Paco Catorce,” so-nicknamed after executing thirteen people in the war and subsequently threatening to turn townspeople into his fourteenth victim. Catorce, Aguirre reminds, “todavía vive . . . se le puede ver por los bares” (52).

It is perhaps the final interrogation scene, in which men of an unidentified police force question the protagonist for unknown reasons, that is most emblematic of the war’s legacy and of Aguirre’s traumatized memory of it. Perhaps more sinister than the questions and veiled threats are the thoughts racing through Aguirre’s head, “han encontrado algo de la época de Franco. Lo de entonces no importa. . . . Ahora se levantará y te dará una bofetada. Tranquilo, casi es mejor que empiecen cuanto antes”

(158-60). Though the novel does not include any ghost-like figurations, it can be said that the Civil War and Francoist past haunts Aguirre. It is a past apparently buried and forgotten that rises, uncannily and unexpectedly to the surface, reviving old fears.

Because of his mistrust of all organized power, there is no adequate program of resistance, no cause or group that Mecha may join. Presumably, the war and post-war repression has given rise to organized resistance such as the electric company boycott or the HETA group. As we have seen, however, Aguirre takes a stance – a seemingly principled one, rather than the nihilistic one of Shepe – against these groups, seeing in them a new form of coercion.

Koldo Izaguirre thus strikes a blow against understandings of memory as constitutive of an ethnos and of group solidarity. Through dark, subversive humor, more than through counter-argument, the author strips the politics of resistance of its moral legitimacy, replacing it with the profoundly individualistic resistance of his anti-heroic Aguirre. With his credentials as a rural Basque and a veteran of the “correct” side of the war, the protagonist fights against those who claim to hold the keys to being a “buen vasco,” against the dominance of any “pensamiento único,” local or national. Rather than affirm Basqueness in opposition to Spanish, the novel opposes the creation of national identity in and of itself. If national identity requires rootedness in a national space, the tribe of the Aguirres occupies an indefinite position. They root themselves between the concrete place of mountains and apple orchards and the state of placelessness and grouplessness, residing as they do in “todas partes,” affiliated by marginality and failure rather than by ethnicity.

4.3. Kirmen Uribe's Dislocated Memory

The articulation of identity from an in-between space – both grounded in homeland and grounded in non-space, or grounded in neither – offers a point of comparison between *Las malandazas* and Kirmen Uribe's novel *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*. Awarded the Premio Nacional de Narrativa in 2009 – before its Castilian language translation had been published – the novel thrust Uribe, previously known among readers of Basque for his poetry, into the national spotlight. Though *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* is too recent to be included in published manuals of Basque literature, it appears to have instantly joined the ranks of canonical novels. Jon Kortazar has gone so far as to assert that, despite a generalized belief in the rigidity of the Basque canon, the novel “ha planteado el cambio literario de la manera más contundente” (“La novela”). Along with a blitz of media attention, the book received positive press reviews, such as Kortazar's and Pozuelo Yvancos's in *El cultural*.

Pozuelo Yvancos summarizes in his review that “Uribe ha creado una novela que tiene la rara cualidad de servir la tradición sin que suene a folk, y de ser moderna sin renunciar a los que lo fueron antes” (“Mapa de un tesoro” 14). This quality has likely contributed to the book's successful popular reception; as of the spring of 2012, it was on its sixth print run in Basque and fourth in Spanish, as cataloged in WorldCat. There is something in the book to please all audiences. Eschewing the nihilism of *Galdu arte*, it embraces the importance of cultural memory; yet, as a book that narrates the efforts of the narrator (an eponymous Kirmen Uribe) to write a novel, *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* is “una autoficción . . . que muestra sus costuras” (Pozuelo Yvancos, “Mapa de un tesoro” 14). By adapting the metafictional genre, Uribe seeks new ways of storytelling and

articulating identity, while revealing a degree of constructedness in identity narrative and avoiding clichéd *costumbrismo*. Uribe's metafiction – and this too has probably contributed to the novel's success – does not entail cold experimentation or an angst-ridden attempt to find a form, but instead reads as the humble revelation of a sincere narrator's creative method. His effort to show a different image of the Basque Country – a largely depoliticized, optimistic one – without hiding the existence of separatist violence provides another explanation of the book's reception.

A summary of the book will do the novel little justice, for it is not a plot-driven work, but I will attempt one to orient my analysis. The novel is constructed as an amalgam of anecdotes filtered through the voice of the narrator, Kirmen. The fragments are brief and, though they occasionally reproduce written formats, conversational in nature, as opposed to the well-crafted more formal tales compiled in Atxaga's *Obabakoak*. These fragments relate Kirmen's present and memories, conversations with others, snippets of readings – taken from sources such as journals, press articles, e-mails, and Wikipedia – and reflections on all of above. Acting in the place of plot is the narrator's search for a structuring device. He identifies several: an investigation of the story behind an Aurelio Arteta painting (13), the investigation of the name of his grandfather's fishing boat (*Dos amigos*) and the world of fishermen (18-9), the writing of a "novela de intriga" about a Regoyos painting lost in the Civil War (31), and the recollections made by the narrator as he travels on one leg of the flight to which the title alludes, from Bilbao to New York (136). It is no coincidence that this center of recollection is the ultimate non-space, one literally far removed from the Earth, gathering an international set of passengers, and constantly in movement.

Neither of these organizing structures ultimately takes hold of the novel. The investigation of *Dos amigos* produces fascinating stories of the life of previous generations of fishermen, but its object, the reason for the boat's name, turns out to be a dud: Uribe's grandfather Liborio had purchased it, secondhand with its name. "No había ningún amigo desaparecido," Kirmen must conclude. "Se acabó el misterio" (187). As Jon Kortazar aptly points out, the novel is ultimately rhizomatic, with "multitud de hilos que van y que vienen," imitating in some aspects the experience of searching for information on the Internet ("La novela"). None of the above mentioned framing devices can really be said to completely pattern the book's threads; the novel finds its structural coherence only with the narrator's intuited certainty of having finished his book.

The novel thus takes the form of writing still on the path to becoming a finished piece of writing. The book's structural imminence is one of several ways in which it takes interstitial positions, as it does on its exploration of the links between memory and identity. The potential investigation topics the book takes up, which I have listed above, share as subject matters Kirmen's family past or village history. As such, the book may be described as a search for family and (small, rural) village roots, the building blocks of primordial identity. Yet, even while unearthing the particularities of his local word, Uribe creates rhizomatic connections to overseas locations, which, it turns out, share some of the same dramas and myths as his village of Ondarroa. Uribe shows Smith's "symbolic resources" of representing and performing identity to be of essential importance while pointing out that they are contingent on circumstance his village shares with other peripheries.

I will comment upon three aspects of the novel in which Uribe simultaneously

rescues identity myth while incorporating modernist understandings of identity: his use of orality, his representation of the Civil War and its meaning for the Basque Country, and his turn to the “glocal,” which depends on technology-aided connectivity. All of these aspects construct a complex and ambivalent treatment of the past. Lacking Mecha Aguirre’s acerbic cynicism, Uribe’s narrator figure does see himself as solidly rooted in familial-cultural history. At the same time, as in Izaguirre’s novel, memory of the past is unreliable, plagued by myth and the needs of narration and group psychology. The search for what has taken place, and the discoveries of new ways to articulate and conceive it, turn out to matter as much as the past itself.

The orality of Uribe’s novel has well-known precedents in post-Franco Basque literature, most notably, as studied by Ibon Izurieta, in Atxaga’s *Obabakoak*. The last, and longest, section of Atxaga’s novel depends on a postmodern reworking of the early modern frame structure to give characters an excuse to narrate short stories, as in the *Canterbury Tales* or *1001 Nights*. In Basque novels, orality performs contradictory functions. On the one hand, orality harkens back to what is considered the strength of the Basque literary tradition (see Mitxelena’s comments above). This function is not lost on Uribe, who points out in his novel the existence of “una rica y antiquísima tradición oral” (194). On the other hand, in accordance with his view of peripheral literature as being by its nature marginal and excluded, François Paré asserts “that the mechanisms of orality, which are of quite secondary importance in the official history of literature, are of fundamental importance for literatures of exiguity.” It offers, in this view, an alternative route to the collective utterance without depending on the institutional apparatuses that marginalize exiguous literature (21).

Still further, as in *Obabakoak* (and to a lesser extent in *Malandanzas*), orality allows for the transformation of an autochthonous form of narration into post-modern experimentation. The framing together of oral stories produces the postmodern tendencies of fragmentary narration, intertextuality, metafictionality, the plurality of narration that breaks with author authority, and the abandoning of grand-scale narration. The narrator makes his method explicit in his description of the book:

La idea había tomado cuerpo, y al final se estructuraría en torno a un vuelo entre Bilbao y Nueva York. El reto consistía en hablar de tres generaciones distintas de una familia, sin volver a la novela del siglo XIX. Expondría el proyecto de escritura de la novela, y fragmentariamente, muy fragmentariamente, historias de esas tres generaciones. (136)

The citation encapsulates the novel's project of joining seemingly opposite currents: writing about writing, in the vein of Enrique Vila-Matas, and the tracing of origins through family and village history.

The concept of family as continuity with the past, I cannot fail to mention, accords with Uribe's understanding of tradition, as Kortazar aptly points out. Through the narration of his ancestors' stories Kirmen emphasizes the construction of himself as in great part their legacy. He also, during the course of the novel, engenders a son, Unai, assuring continuity into the future (Kortazar, "La novela"). But, in keeping with the poetics of the novel, this engendering breaks with the practices of his ancestors, resulting not from biology but from Kirmen's relationship with Unai's single mother, Nerea. The inserted poem "Nacer" emphasizes the non-conventional nature of the birth: "Naciste a mis ojos con trece años./ Así de repente./ Fue un parto muy original,/ pues naciste mientras cenábamos una pizza" (202). At the same time the poem reaffirms the narrator's belief in a traditional model of family (with an expanded definition) by insistently

figuring Unai as a son, a metaphorical newborn for a father, even if an unconventional newborn.

The Civil War, as *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* represents it, remains a foundational moment for the Basque culture the narrator roots in the past. However, because Uribe shows that the war divided even his village and even his own family, the war cannot serve as a heroic epic of Basque resistance. Instead, Uribe calls for a break with the supposed nationalist myths by admitting unwelcome truths and for a transformation of the conflict into a symbol of unity by focusing on moments of reconciliation. The use of internal war as a symbol of cultural identity is of course a paradoxical, difficult proposition, as we have seen in novels such as *La sima*. It is, however, precisely the function of the *Lieux de mémoire* Pierre Nora identifies, where raw, directly lived memory is put to rest and depoliticized. Uribe, however, does retain something of a political edge to his representation of the war by suggesting that it divided Basques but, at the same time, also brought an end to an older Basque world his novel reconstructs.

The past pertaining to the Civil War appears in approximately one dozen references in the novel. The narrator, unlike the protagonist of many novels of memory in both Basque and Castilian, does not seek out a lost episode or victim of the war. Rather, the presence of the war is inescapable, for it has altered the lives of those who lived through it, those biographies the book collects. For many of the characters, the war means death or exile. These include Ricardo Bastida, whose childhood journal Kirmen reads, and who is killed after being unwillingly conscripted by the Nationals; the painter Aurelio Arteta, exiled in Mexico; and Kirmen's grandfather Hipólito Urbieto, who joins other villagers from Ondarroa in fleeing by boat upon the arrival of the Francoist troops.

Closer to Javier Cercas than to Benjamín Prado, Uribe calls for reconciliation by finding examples of beauty and humanity amidst the horrors of the war. For example, Kirmen includes an episode of town history in which a bomb strikes the home of Meabe, setting free his brood of song birds, concluding: “*Debió de ser algo mágico, después de una fuerte explosión cientos de pájaros cantando, libres. Tras un suceso tan grave, tras el miedo, tras la destrucción, la alegría se adueñó de aquellas calles por un momento*” (113; ital. in orig.). In another example, Kirmen’s great aunt recalls how his grandmother, the wife of a Spanish National soldier, takes into her home and protects both a Francoist official named Javier and the daughter of a Republican prisoner. The aunt, named Maritxu, explains “una cosa son las ideas y otra el corazón” (27). In a similar episode, long after the war, Kirmen’s maternal grandmother Amparo, a Basque nationalist, repeatedly visits Kirmen’s terminally ill grandfather, Liborio, to read him the Francoist press.

In his call to reconciliation, Uribe does not present a simplistic, neutral image of memory of the war. Rather, while sympathizing openly with the Republican side, he shows it not idealized or as monolithic, instead emphasizing its internal complexity and factiousness, and showing that being Basque did not always mean being Republican. The artist Arteta, for example, flees to Mexico sick of infighting among Republicans. Of the participants in the war, Liborio, the Francoist grandfather, receives the most attention. His status as “un personaje contradictorio,” as a practically monolingual Basque who supports the uprising, fascinates the narrator of a book in search of its story, and allows the author to break with what he sees as a common myth. To justify his focus on Liborio, Uribe the narrator prefigures nearly exactly the words spoken by Uribe the author on the

war, which I have quoted in chapter 3:

[S]entía la necesidad de contar la historia del abuelo Liborio, de no seguir obviando una realidad tantas veces silenciada. La guerra civil fue también una guerra entre vascos. No fue una mera invasión de las tropas franquistas. Debía verbalizarlo, exteriorizar que uno de mis abuelos optó por el bando incorrecto. Aunque me pesara mucho. (142)

The above passage introduces some nuance to Uribe's press quote by including two qualifiers: "también" and "mera." Here the war *is* one between Basques but *also* something else.

Recalling the image of the Ondarroa bridge being destroyed, we might conclude that the war ends a way of life Kirmen is dedicating his book to describing. In one passage the war is shown as destructive of the small-village seafaring and farming rural world depicted in Ricardo Bastida's homemade films (41) or in Aurelio Arteta's paintings (14-5). This occurs when a Republican leader, Santi Meabe, in order to slow the Francoist advance into Ondarroa, destroys the village's old bridge, "que había sido tantas veces pintado por los artistas, símbolo de un mundo antiguo . . ." (114). The war will result in the curtailing of the only language that Liborio dominates and in the implantation of a non-democratic regime forced from without, even if one welcomed by many on the inside. As the two opposing ideologies coexist in Kirmen's bloodlines, and in the narrated family history that constitute his identity, so too oppositional truths coexist in his vision of the war.

Uribe similarly weaves together contradictory understandings of the relationship between narrative memory and identity, one of the most frequently recurring theme of the book. Storytelling in the novel records and preserves the past, and marks out a community through its continuity of existence; however, as a reiterated, but evolving

performance, it constantly reinvents the community, especially as it is conducted through new media. Furthermore, as Uribe seeks out the particular – his own family history, the linguistic practices of his corner of the Basque Country – he juxtaposes it to what the well-traveled author discovers beyond Iberia. As a result, that which seems to mark exclusive identity at times turns out to be contingent on geography and historical circumstances, to be equally important to other collectivities.

As he does with his theory of writing, Uribe the narrator sets forth explicitly his understanding of collective memory. Group memory functions along the lines proposed by Maurice Halbwachs and his successors as narrations that shape a group's values and in turn are shaped by its needs:

Es curioso como trabaja la memoria, cómo recordamos a nuestra manera, convirtiendo en ficción lo que en otro tiempo fue realidad. . . . Se inventan historias no sólo para ilustrar o educar, también para compartir creencias, para legar tradiciones o para acordarse de los antepasados. Gracias a esas narraciones recordamos a quienes nos precedieron y nos hacemos una idea de cómo fueron. (46)

Uribe here confronts the paradoxical dual function of memory that Paul Ricoeur identifies, as imagination/invention (convirtiendo en ficción) on the one hand, and recorder/preserver (acordarse de los antepasados) on the other. Uribe's book, focused on family history, clearly enough acts out the latter function. At the same time the author deliberately displays memory's fiction-making. In one example, Uribe obtains documentation of the 1908 sinking of the sailboat *San Marcos*, in which at least two family predecessors died. His great aunt tells him that the boat had sunk in the waters off of Ondarroa, as family members watched helplessly, when in fact the documents show that the boat had sunk far out of sight off of Asturias. In narrated memory, the locational transferal adds greater drama to the now temporally distant disaster. Uribe details similar

transformations suited to dramatize the stories of larger collectivities, as with the fountain of Elorrio (48-50) or the story of an American slave shipped to Skagen, Denmark (169-71). As Uribe sees it “La manera en que trabaja la memoria no sólo atañe a las familias, también a los pueblos” (48).

Furthermore, Uribe explores how the medium in which cultural memory is communicated shapes its content, rather than merely passing it down. Methods used to record/render Basqueness – Arteta’s painting, video cameras recording scenes in Ondarroa, voice recorders used to collect Basque vocabulary – filter tradition through the most ephemeral of formats. For example, the Arteta mural “La romería I,” a color replication of which is inserted into the book (between pages 16 and 17), meant to represent the joining of “dos mundos, y los dos están unidos. . . . el mundo rural, y . . . el mundo urbano” (14) instead captures the aesthetic of the time period that produced it. For Uribe, the most interesting aspect of the painting is that, from the women’s dress, “es muy clara la influencia del Art Decó; irradia el optimismo de los años veinte” (14).

In another example, the interactive features of Kirmen’s son Unai’s soccer video game allow him to reinscribe a hallowed symbol of Basqueness – the Athletic Club of Bilbao – for his own purposes. In the sequence of the novel in which Unai plays the game, Uribe casts himself as a square father interested in maintaining tradition by insisting that his son compete with the Bilbao team, rather than Unai’s favorite choice of the more talented Chelsea. As Jeremy MacClancy explains, throughout its long history, the Athletic has often been seen as representative of Basque identity in general and nationalist politics specifically. To this day the team maintains a rabid fan base and its unusual, though now somewhat relaxed, policy of signing only Basque players (44-67).

Unai agrees to his father's urging but, to Kirmen's dismay, uses the game's advanced functions to add several foreign superstars (166).

Unai's "Athletic Club" allows, in the realm of fantasy, a hybrid entity that grants its creator the best of two worlds: staying within family tradition and beating his computer opponent. (Never mind that this team, starring Messi and Torres, plainly violates that spirit of the real-world team.) It provides also one of several examples of book's nods to the "glocal": the experience of the local through the globalized phenomena and vice versa. Memories that are considered autochthonous to the Basque Country and constitutive of a particular identity with a unique common past occur, it turns out, in other cultures.

Shared memories, myths, and crises are discovered in the series of transoceanic linkages drawn through Kirmen's e-mails, Facebook messages, and plane trips and his father's and grandfather's fishing voyages. For example, in an authors' seminar on European languages in Käsma, Estonia, other minority literatures show much in common with Basque Literature. For instance, the Welsh poet Meredid Puq Dadies' manifesto on small cultures parallels *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao's* practice:

Nuestras pequeñas culturas deben renovarse, sostenía. Cambiar los procedimientos. Adaptarse a la época. . . . [H]oy en día no sólo existían los libros. Ahí estaban las nuevas tecnologías como muestra. . . . Ahora no se escribía únicamente para los miembros de la misma comunidad. Ahora el mundo era más pequeño. (101)

In his trip to Stornoway, Scotland, close to his father's fishing grounds, and the site of his father's trial for violating international fishing jurisdiction laws, Kirmen discovers a direct overlapping with Basque lore; that, according to a nineteenth-century travel book, "los escoceses creían que la lengua de Tubal era el gaélico, igual que los vascos" (149).

This is the same myth, recalled by Uribe earlier in the novel, written by the sixteenth-century historian Esteban Garibai, that Basque was spoken on the tower of Babel and was brought to the Basque Country by Tubal upon the tower's collapse (25). Though the myth is hardly taken seriously (it is dismissed even in *Peru Abarka*, the novel of customs written in 1802), it is still called upon to invoke the Basque's mysterious origins and age of its culture and language. Uribe hints that memories like the Tubal myth have much to do with contingent circumstance that may recur in different territories. We may infer that the Scots match the Basques as internal "others" with a culture linked to the old and the rural, one whose origins have times become obfuscated.

It must be noted that these connections – particularly the ocean voyages – often take place directly from seaside periphery to seaside periphery. Travel by boat does not require radial travel through the metropolis. In this sense, the fishing voyages of Kirmen's ancestors – perhaps like the more democratic exchange of information the Internet is thought to provide – charts out a new organization of space, freed from centralized control. The peripheral condition itself, which is not universal, but not unique to the Basque Country either, plays a key role in forming identity in the spaces networked in the novel.

The wave of immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Basque Country, which appears sporadically throughout the novel, exemplifies both Uribe's call for a more inclusive definition of Basqueness, and his desire to stress the peripheral contingency of customs often linked to indigenous Basqueness. For example, Uribe describes an Arteta painting, *Despedida de la lanchas*, in which a woman holds up her son to remind her departing husband of what he is leaving behind. This gesture is repeated under a variant

of the process of seafaring by necessity in an Internet photo of African women immigrants taking rafts to the Canary Islands, who hold up their children so that they may be spotted from rescue boats. Similarly, the seafaring jobs so central to the way of life of Kirmen's ancestors are increasingly being taken over by Senegalese immigrants, who make up approximately five percent of Ondarroa's population. As Kirmen tells his neighbor on the Frankfurt-New York flight, "En el 2001 los armadores reclamaron la necesidad de nuevos pescadores y su demanda la atendieron desde Senegal. Allí hay una gran tradición marina" (110). Kirmen adds that most of these immigrants come from the Serer-Niominka ethnic group, whose demonym means "Gente de mar" (110). This is precisely the title of short film made by the Bastida family in 1928, depicting the fishing life of Ondarroa.

According to English-language Wikipedia, within the Serer ethnic group, a minority population that straddles the Senegal/Gambia border, the Niominka are a tiny group of 10,000 inhabiting the islands of the Saloum River Delta. We might draw an unstated parallel to the Basques on the border of France, and Ondarroa within the Basque Country.

The same investigation that seeks remnants of an ethnic past along Romantic lines finds in *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* connections to other cultures, including those that through globalization will to some degree fuse with the Basque. Uribe's understanding of the past thus incorporates primordial views of ethnicity based on organic tradition, while accepting modernist view of ethnicity as constructed and depending on historical circumstance. The novel thus readapts ethnic symbols that are old, even hackneyed, such as Tubal or Basques as fishermen, but acts them out in new combinations that emphasize

adaptation to the future and incorporation of new cultures.

4.4. Memory and Violence

In a study of two canonical Basque novels of memory, Joseba Gabilondo argues that the Basque novel sees a different cultural foundation than its Spanish equivalent: “Basque historical novels present a marked difference from their Spanish counterparts when it comes to choosing the historical period to narrate, for they revisit the aftermath of 68 rather than the Civil War – the most important period in the Spanish historical novel” (“Terrorism as Memory” 116). By the year 1968, Gabilondo refers to the beginning of ETA’s armed attacks, initially against Spain’s military and police forces and politicians. Following the terms of Doris Sommer’s classic study of Latin American nation-building novels, *Foundational Fictions*, he argues:

[I]n general the Civil War constitutes the foundational moment of modern democratic Spain. . . . Instead of the Civil War, the Basque novels cipher the insurgence of ETA and the armed resistance to Francoism in the late 60s and early 70s as the foundational moment of the Basque Country . . . Hence the historical difference in the choice of founding events between Spanish and Basque novels points to the existence of, at least, two coexisting but different foundational fictions within the Spanish State. (“Terrorism as Memory” 116-7)

It is difficult to argue with Gabilondo’s point about the importance of the Civil War to either the Spanish novel or political discourse, which often sees the ancestry of current ideologies in the war period.

The thesis as it applies to the Basque novel is perhaps more debatable simply because the critic bases his observation on only two novels. The number of novels published in Basque is still small enough that generalizations may require re-thinking with the publication of one or two new novels that break with the observation. In fact, in

the years just prior to Gabilondo's article (1998) and subsequently, at least a half-dozen Basque-language novels focusing on the Spanish Civil War, the titles of which I have already have cited, have been published in Basque and translated into Spanish. As Mari José Olaziregi summarized in 2009, "es más que reseñable entre nosotros el incremento del número de novelas que han elegido la guerra civil española no solo como escenario de las historias narradas, sino como eje temático y simbólico de las mismas" ("La recuperación" 1038).

That the first two article-length publications on Basque Civil War novels have been published since 2008, in the form of Kortazar's and Olaziregi's conference papers, points to two occurrences. The first is the reaching of a critical mass of works on the subject, which as both pieces indicate, was first taken up as early as 1948 by the exiled PNV official José Eizaguirre in *Ekaitzpean/Bajo la tormenta*. The second is the predominance of the Civil War memory in Spanish culture and, more generally, of memory in the humanities. In his article "Memoria y Guerra Civil en la narrativa vasca (1948-2007)," Kortazar, aware of the lack of previous studies on his topic, compares Basque memory works to those written in Galician, testing the observation of Galician critics like Dolores Vilavedra. He finds that recent works such as *Antzararen bidea* (*The Goose's Path*) fit Ana Luengo's conceptual framework for the Spanish "Nueva Novela Histórica." These are novels that show the tendency to narrate the past from the present tense, reproducing, over against historiographical methods, the characteristics of recall and narration such as the distortion of events, subjectivity, and non-linear chronology ("Memoria y Guerra Civil" 13-4). Olaziregi contextualizes her study within what she calls, following Jan-Werner Müller, the "'explosión' de la memoria a propósito del

protagonismo que ésta tiene en el actual paradigma teórico de las humanidades” (“La recuperación” 1030).

The recent rise in interest in the Civil War offers a counterpart to Gabilondo’s thesis. A thorny question arises also in the attribution of a moment of conflict as “the ‘political and historical origin’ after which the modern democratic Basque Country is built” (“Terrorism as Memory” 116). For, the statement may be understood to suggest that political violence has served as a building block for the current democracy, rather than an obstacle. Without a doubt many Basques would vehemently object.²³

Yet, there is no question that separatist violence was until very recently, if it is not still, “the political problem at the core of the Basque Country” (Gabilondo, “Terrorism as Memory” 115), and in this a sense its birth a foundational, if ultimately divisive and destructive, event. As of the time of this writing, ETA appears to be living out its final hours, having declared an end to its armed campaign in October 2011 after a prolonged period of declining capacity, ever-tightening police pressure, and the dwindling support of its last bastion of backers on the radical nationalist left. But there is no question that ETA’s activity has dominated much of the political discussion in Euskadi and Navarra during the democracy and had a significant impact on day-to-day life there. The terrorist group has seen a corresponding importance in Basque cultural representation, appearing in some form as the main focus of well-known novels and films from the early days of the transition to contemporary times. These include the novels of Gabilondo’s article: Atxaga’s *Gizona bere bakardean/El hombre solo* (1993; *The Lone Man*) and Saizarbitoria’s *Hamaika pauso/Los pasos incontables* (1995; *Countless Steps*). Other

²³ An opinion poll held prior to ETA’s declaration of a “permanent and verifiable” ceasefire found that only 1 percent of the population of the autonomous region of Euskadi fully supported ETA, while 64 percent expressed total rejection (*Euskobarómetro mayo 2011*).

examples include Saizarbitoria's *100 metro* (1975), Imanol Uribe's films *El proceso de Burgos* (1979; *The Burgos Trial*), *La fuga de Segovia* (1981; *Escape from Segovia*), *La muerte de Mikel* (1984; *The Death of Mikel*), and *Días contados* (1994; *Running out of Time*), Helena Taberna's film *Yoyes* (2000), Julio Medem's documentary *La pelota vasca. La piel sobre la piedra* (2003; *Basque Ball. Skin against Stone*), Atxaga's *Zeru horiek/ Esos cielos* (1995; *The Lone Woman*), and Lertxundi's *Etxeko hausta/Los trapos sucios* (2011; *Dirty Laundry*).

Paradoxically, Cainistic violence appears often in foundational stories, starting with the myth of Romulus and Remus, in which Rome's foundation requires fratricide. The Spanish Civil War as foundational story follows this prototype. As Claudia Jünke has pointed out, analysis of memory in the Iberian concept must account for the paradox of creating a uniting national memory from conflict. Unlike in the French case, which Nora analyzes, Spanish national *lieux de mémoire* must unite the memory of the "two Spains" (105). We have seen in this study two senses in which the Spanish Civil War is made foundational in novels: In the first, as in *Mala gente que camina*, a present day ideology sees as its predecessor one side of the war, acting in its most heroic (if ultimately failed) moment. In the other model, as in *Soldados de Salamina* and *La sima*, conflict is evoked as uniting in tragedy. Perhaps the function of uniting requires the dulling of precision of historical fact in the novels' central images. In *La sima*, the truth about the crevice, whether in fact it contains the bodies of victims, is left undiscovered and undiscoverable. As I have pointed out, following Amar Sánchez, the poetics of equivocation in *Soldados de Salamina*, erases "la distancia y . . . las diferencias" between sides (188).

Ernest Renan reminds us that for the political community, "Unity is always

created through brutality.” Thus, for Renan:

Forgetting . . . and . . . historical error are an essential factor in the creation of a nation, and thus the advances of historical study are often threatening to a nationality. . . . [T]he essence of nation is that individuals have many things in common, but have forgotten many other things. . . . No French citizen knows if he is Burgundian, Alani, Taifali or Visigoth; every French citizen must have forgotten Saint Bartholomew’s Day, the thirteenth-century massacres in the Midi. (50-1)

In this sense a national *lieu de mémoire* may be considered a site of selective forgetting as well as of remembrance, a site that remembers so that individuals may forget.²⁴

Gabilondo’s thesis, then, seeing the “insurgence of ETA and the armed resistance to Francoism of the late 60s and early 70s as the foundational moment of the Basque Country” (“Terrorism as Memory” 116) is a provocative starting point for my discussion on memory of terrorism in literature, pointing the way to dialectic of memory/forgetting and unity/disunity with which I will end this chapter. The all-importance of terrorist violence, which during its peak appeared relentlessly in the press, literature, and politics, may be considered as uniting because it created memories, even if competing ones, of shared trauma. On the other hand, needless to say, terrorism polarized the Basque population and created oppositional memories.

The Freudian basis of Gabilondo’s correlative thesis, that the Basque novels he reviews do not narrate fully successful national memories because of their discourse of “masculine masochism,” in which the protagonist sacrifices his life to the Spanish-Basque conflict, falls outside the methodology of this dissertation. But the function he ascribes to memory in literature lies at the heart of the distinction I have drawn between text and political discourse. For, as Gabilondo observes of Atxaga’s and Saizarbitoria’s

²⁴ I am indebted to Professor’s Vincent J. Cheng for this idea, which he expressed in informal remarks following a 2012 MLA convention presentation.

works, “these novels are a first sign of the formation, not of the political truth about the Basque Country and its history, but of memory that can be potentially shared by the entire national community, regardless of its political ideology” (“Terrorism as Memory” 115). Without identifying it by name, the observation appears to point to Pierre Nora’s understanding of the *lieux de mémoire* as physical or textual sites in which national collective identity is crystallized, in which politicized, live memory is symbolically represented as common heritage. The transformation of memory types involves a lessening of memory’s threat. I would argue that Basque authors still see such a dulling or forgetting as impossible; hence the self-destruction and incomplete foundation Gabilondo observes. Terrorist violence is too recent, too raw, too destructive, and too polarizing to be forgotten or acquire any unifying function.

There is no paradigm that fits how Basque novels have represented memory of ETA violence. There are two themes that the novels frequently engage, however: the relationship of separatist violence to the Civil War, and the inevitability of memory of violence as a constant presence lying beneath the surface. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Santiago de Pablo and Igor Barrenetxea have documented the portrayal of the Civil War as a Basque-Spanish conflict in foreign films. They especially criticize, as historically inaccurate, Arthur MacCaig’s 1983 film *Euskadi: hors d’état*, for drawing simplistic parallels between the war and terrorism, as episode of the same, prolonged struggle.

In fact, the historical cause and effect relationship between the Civil War and terrorism is an extremely complex and much debated matter. Certainly, the object of the fight for the Basque Country (autonomy/independence) was similar. Needless to say, the

difference in the nature of the struggle, and their relationship to democracy – the defense of an elected government, versus an attack against its agents, after the transition – make their comparison offensive to many Basques and Spaniards.

According to studies of ETA history, the organization was born in the 1950s as a youth group dissatisfied with the PNV's lack of direct action and compromise positions on independence. As John Sullivan shows, the history of the ETA has been so marked by splintering and turnover caused by ideological and personality clashes, arrests, and deaths that is impossible to attribute to it any single consistent ideological program beyond the goal of complete independence and at the least a rhetoric favoring of the working class. As Joseba Zulaika shows, the organization's ranks, in its period of peak strength in the late 1970s and early 1980s, included a disproportionate number of ethnic Basques from declining agricultural communities, especially of Gipuzkoa (*Basque Violence*). Yet, there is no agreed-upon explanation for what motivated ETA members to the violent extremes not seen elsewhere in the Spanish peripheries.

Clearly enough, through its first actions, ETA not only aligned itself against the dictatorship of Franco, but also symbolically refought the war. These included an attempt “to derail a train carrying Civil War veterans to a rally celebrating the 25th anniversary of Franco's rising” and “wall daubings and the defacement of memorials commemorating Franco's victory in the Civil War” (Sullivan 36). This stance brought the group high support in the Basque Country and the international community during the dictatorship, which subsequently waned in during the democracy. Its strategy of initiating cycles of action-government repression-action capitalized on occasions of brutal tactics by law enforcement (including torture of ETA members and the funding of the antiterrorist GAL

death squads during the democratic period) to make the claim of two nations at war plausible to nationalists. However, ETA's methods, including the assassination of innocent bystanders, politicians, and kidnapping victims who refused to pay ransom, make questionable the legitimacy of such claims during the democracy.

Writers have investigated and problematized the connection between the war and terrorism, searching for images to explain how the injustice of the war and imposition of dictatorship led to armed resistance to a dictatorship and then to the assassination of innocent people and the division of Basque society decades later. In *The Accordionist's Son*, Atxaga compares ETA violence to an out of control wrecking ball (432). Anjel Lertxundi, for example, draws a parallel between the Civil War and ETA violence not over the objectives and stakes of violence (i.e. a free Euskadi), but, rather, in the injustice that is committed when violence claims victims. Hence he proposes as equivalent the silence and oblivion attached to victims of both the war and ETA. He calls both “[e]l inmenso sudario de silencio que España mantiene aún desplegado sobre las víctimas de la Guerra Civil” and “el trato que hemos deparado a las víctimas de la violencia vasca contemporánea” examples of “crímenes perfectamente perfectos” (*Vidas* 98). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, *Antzararen bidea* makes identical two heroic characters separated by decades, Dioni and Igor – except that Dioni's milieu is portrayed as being sensitive, ethical, politically engaged and brave, while Igor's is revealed as conformist and hypocritical.

Lertxundi's most recent novel, *Dirty Laundry*, which takes head-on the task of acknowledging the damages caused by terrorism, as well as the direct or indirect complicity of Basque society, brings me to my second observation on recent Basque

novels of memory: the tendency to represent terrorism as ever-present, impossible to forget, lying uncannily beneath the surface. I mean by this that a number of books (Lertxundi's novel, Bernardo Atxaga's *The Lone Man* and *The Lone Woman*) construct a dynamic of remembering and forgetting that may be described along the terms Freud outlines in his well-known essay "The 'Uncanny.'" In these works, violence lies beneath the surface, resurfacing, often with lethal consequences, despite protagonists' efforts to relegate it to the past.

Joseba Gabilondo has applied the term "uncanny" to Basque film portraying violence, but I will use it within a different framework, for Gabilondo describes the performance of violence as stemming from the othering of Basque identity. He argues that "the moment Basque identity is violently erased it re-emerges with a vengeance" ("Uncanny Identity" 264). He concludes that Basque film performs violence against the Basque identity to "break the state's monopoly on negation" and "take *jouissance* away from the state" (277). I will take distance also from the adaptation of LaCapra's Freudian trauma-theory to literature, which would suggest literature as a means of curatively working through, rather than repeating, traumatic violence. Rather than analyze the psychoanalytic processes at play in representation or filmmaking, I invoke Freud's description of the uncanny in order, more narrowly, to shed light on the dialectic of remembering and forgetting the present in novelistic reflections on violence. That is to say, that which it would be better to forget cannot be forgotten, and reappears.

In Freud's essay, the uncanny is "that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" ("The 'Uncanny'" 220). It is "something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only

through the process of repression . . . something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (241). The analogy between uncaniness and terrorism is not perfect, for Freud divides the uncanny into two categories: the remnants of “primitive” animistic belief systems and the infantile, neither of which applies to the present discussion. But uncanny describes perfectly the resurfacing of an unwanted, all-too familiar dread.

The infrequent mention of ETA in Uribe’s novel, in a book which engages clearly enough in a portrayal of an identity and history, I believe stems from the author’s desire to offer a different image of the Basque Country. In one of his first interviews following the awarding of the Premio Nacional to *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, Uribe told *El País*: “En Euskadi veo un país moderno, donde la gente quiere convivir y vivir en paz” (Marín). Uribe’s description is exactly the opposite of the most simplistic stereotypes diffused about the Basque Country: old, traditional, and marred by violence.

Yet, ETA violence eventually makes its presence felt in the final pages of the book, in the form of a nocturnal bombing of a nearby police station that shreds a window and blind of the narrator’s house. The juxtaposition of the bombing to dreaming – Kirmen is awoken from a nightmare by the sound – lends the scene an oneiric aura, suggesting that violence had been relegated to the suppressed subconscious. The episode is told in fragments, interrupted by the narrator’s description of his flight finally landing in New York. What had been absent throughout the novel forces its way back in, at the climactic moment, as a reality one might attempt to shunt away, but which cannot be ignored and must be confronted. Here Kirmen is at his most melancholy: “Llegarán los carpinteros. Cambiarán las persianas. Acudirán las cámaras de televisión. Se marcharán. Nada

cambiará” (192).

The episode indicates that violence in the society that Uribe represents is for the time being still very much present. As much as the author would like to leave behind, ignore, or downplay that aspect of the represented world, it returns, inexorably. As Uribe wrote in a *País* column, “a lo largo de toda mi vida, ETA y la violencia han estado presentes, ahí detrás. Como una sombra que se alargaba y acortaba” (“Mi vida entera”).

Joxemari Iturralde’s 2006 novel *Hyde Park-eko hizlaria* (2010 Spanish translation *El orador de Hyde Park; The Speaker of Hyde Park*), without depicting terrorism, similarly figures violence lying beneath the surface, thought to be relegated to the past, that erupts into the present. (The author, born in 1951, participated in the so-called *Pott Banda* of the late 1970s, though he is less-known than the other former members including Atxaga, Jon Juaristi, Ruper Ordorika, and Joseba Sarrionandia.) Set in 1970,²⁵ the novel narrates a rite-of-passage trip to London by a group of middle-class Basque youth. Taking advantage of the freedom available in London, as embodied in the famous Hyde Park Speaker’s corner, and not present in Francoist Spain, they set out “cargados de mochilas y sacos de dormir” in search of “abundantes chicas, cerveza y buenos conciertos de rock” (11).

Following the structures characteristic of the “Nueva Novela Histórica” described by Cortázar, the novel is told fragmentarily by multiple narrators: in the primary, first-person narration of the protagonist Jotaeme, in first-person excerpts from the journal of a Basque student abroad named Edurne, and in a third-person omniscient narration. The latter focuses on an eccentric Basque political exile alternately called LeO, L.O., or León,

²⁵ The exact year is not specified, but may be inferred from the lineup of musical acts performing in the Isle of White Festival, which is featured prominently in the novel.

who had fled the Civil War, initially to France, and now makes speeches in Basque in Hyde Park. All three strands, but particularly the first and third, focus on memory.

Jotaeme recounts, at an unspecified later time, his “recuerdos” of his friends’ miniature *movida*, minus those erased by a head injury he suffers toward the end of the book.

Eduarne’s journal, by its nature, records her time in London, and overlaps with the other narrations, filling in lacunae or telling alternative versions of the events. The third-person narration focuses especially on historical memory, in the form of L.O.’s stories of the Civil War and his near escapes.

It is one of L.O.’s memories of the war that provokes the novel’s violent final episode. As he recalls a series of murders in Hernani, and his wartime meeting with a Francoist official, who admits to having killed a priest, Jotaeme’s estranged friend Misterio attacks the protagonist, striking him on the head with a metal chair, leaving him hospitalized and lucky to be alive. Given the narrator’s subsequent amnesia, and the haze caused by the consumption of drugs Misterio foists upon his group of friends, the precise reason for the attack is never clarified. L.O. speculates that “la clave de lo sucedido radicaba en algo de lo que él contó sobre alguna muerte o asesinato ocurridos en el pueblo” (155). Jotaeme guesses the attack was provoked “por una pelea que debió de suceder entre mi familia y la suya durante la guerra civil, eso es lo que me contaron, pero desconozco los detalles” (155).

What the book leaves clear is the irresolution of tensions between Basques dating back to the war. The novel’s main story would be that of a summer of youth freedom, but L.O.’s stories bring the past into their consciousness, giving their actions, particularly Misterio’s drug abuse, a quality of frivolous escapism. Time, the arrival of new

generations, the advent of 1960s/1970s youth culture of rebellion, and in the end, amnesia caused by brain injury, stand as barriers to bringing the past in general and the Civil War in particular to mind. The uncanny eruption of violence, caused by motivations related to the war, but never fully clarified, serves as a reminder that the effects of the war, and thus conflict among Basques, continue.

In *Los trapos sucios*, Lertxundi too juxtaposes physiologically-induced amnesia, the confronting of the past, and the uncanny return of violence – in this case ETA violence, which is tied, indirectly to the Civil War. Its author is a prolific and versatile writer who has set his works in periods and geographies ranging from the Salem of the witch-trial era to the contemporary Basque Country. Well received by readers and critics, Lertxundi is consistently mentioned as one of the canonical contemporary Basque writers. Olaziregi, for example has defined Lertxundi as “sin duda, uno de los grandes renovadores de la narrativa vasca moderna” (“Narrativa vasca”).

Lertxundi’s work had previously represented terrorist violence. Most noticeably, the 2002 novel *Zorion perfektua*, translated into Spanish as *Felicidad perfecta* and into English as *Perfect Happiness*, opens with the chance witnessing of an ETA assassination by the protagonist, age 16. The incident forces the protagonist and her family to confront that which they would just as soon ignore. Before the witnessed assassination, the protagonist’s father is one of many who respond to murders with the well-worn phrase “¡Algo habrá hecho!” (55), the expression used to avoid having to express solidarity for the victim or consider the moral implications of political violence. Subsequently he denounces the “crueldad” of ETA assassins (55). Still, the incident increasingly fades from direct mention as the protagonist narrates her adulthood. As Olaziregi summarizes,

“Lertxundi trata de reflexionar en torno a la felicidad ‘perfecta,’ sólo posible si no hay conciencia” (“Narrativa vasca”). I add only that the protagonist, unable to overcome the incident, achieves in fact a state of malaise rather than any semblance of the perfect happiness of the ironic title.

In *Los trapos sucios*, the implications of *Felicidad perfecta* are fleshed out; the will to ignore ETA violence is exposed at length and denounced. It is the uncanny return of violence, which seemingly had been confined to memory, that forces the confrontation with the past. In the novel, the narrator has begun to come to terms with his own complicity in separatist violence when his life is cut short, but an epilogue by his friend, and editor of the manuscript he has left, makes sure that silence is broken.

As I will show, *Los trapos sucios* does more than just denounce ETA violence in terms that would convert the novel into a political manifesto. As I mentioned in chapter 1, Lertxundi believes that “El escritor tiene que incomodar” (Asry). As such, his novel formulates a self-criticism by the narrator, and by extension, of the narrator’s generation, inviting it to take stock of its past. As “una posible radiografía de la gente de mi generación” (Astarloa), in the author’s own words, the novel tells the story of a protagonist of approximately Lertxundi’s age who reexamines his lifetime’s evolving ideology and his (limited) activism of the late Franco years. Lertxundi seems to have little use for the moralistic “boyante industria antinacionalista” (Cercas, “El fracaso de la izquierda”), which is practiced in the novel by a confrontational and imprudent Madrid journalist. Rather, the novel dissects the moral gray zones of blame inhabited by the narrator. The book construes memory as a means of confronting the past, while simultaneously showing skepticism towards the possibility of an objective and accurate

memory and narration used to represent memory. Thus, in the end, Lertxundi advocates for the need to speak of the past and air his generation's dirty laundry, while highlighting both the difficulty of arriving at neat moral stances and the inaccessibility of the past, which is refracted through the subjectivities of its narrator.

I will briefly summarize the novel, beginning with its framing, before proceeding with my analysis. The novel consists nearly entirely of an epistolary reflection written by Gorka/Jorge Martiarena to his father Julián, in period after the consolidation of Spanish democracy. (Since the narrator mentions that twenty years [17] separate the two key events, one in the late Franco years, one in the novel's recent past, we may surmise that the novel's present takes place at some point in the mid or early 1990s). The epistle is intended as a confession to his father, a Francoist Civil War veteran, with whom, since childhood, he has maintained a distant relationship marked by silence and distance. Most importantly, Gorka confesses to participating in underground political activities against the Franco regime, and having collaborated on one occasion with ETA activists by transporting them in his car. The text thus focuses especially on the narrator's childhood and early adulthood, marked by painful shyness and stuttering, describing the circumstances that lead to the ETA incident.

In the episode, at the request of a village woman identified only as "Ella," Gorka agrees to drive two underground ETA activists named Katxas and Gorriya from his village to a new hiding place. While waiting for a rendezvous in a rural village, the two *etarras* fall into a police trap, resulting in Gorriya's capture and Katxas's death. Gorka considers himself "partícipe" in this "carnicería" (145). The episode serves at the primary motivation of Gorka's confession; however, at the time of the journal's writing, the father

suffers from advanced dementia, so that he can neither read the text nor understand when his son reads it to him.

The chronology encompassed by the novel closes with the re-emergence of ETA violence. While the father, a business owner, is still in the early phases of his illness, he receives a letter demanding payment of what is commonly called in Spain the “impuesto revolucionario” – the funds extorted by ETA on threat of assassination. Gorka speaks with “Ella” and successfully has the demand upon his father dropped. Against Gorka’s will, however, a Madrid journalist and former friend named Jesús Maravall publishes an article alluding to the incident, taking advantage of Julián’s dementia to extract all the information from him. Wrongly suspected of having snitched, Gorka is gunned down, apparently by ETA. Despite Gorka’s having left explicit instructions that the text of his “confession” never be published, Agustín, a friend to whom he has entrusted the manuscript, does so, bringing the story to light.

This brief summary points the way to the dialectics around which the narration turns: silence/ speaking, memory/ invention, and finally, complicity/ innocence. These oppositions are never resolved. The novel cries out against silence and complicity, but stops short offering a satisfactory antidote, of completely blaming those who are silent and complicit, or celebrating those who most directly fight against silence.

The narrator’s addressing of his confessions to a father who cannot hear them sets up the book’s central paradox and its motif of opposing silence to dialogue. In speaking to his father, the narrator fails to communicate or dialogue with him, but does successfully gain a better understanding of his own past. Gorka writes to his father thinking that, in doing so, he is:

saldando mis viejas cuantas contigo. Como si mis confesiones te hicieran bien. . . . Para que oigas lo que leo, a pesar de que no seas capaz de entender nada. Para que seas consciente de que estoy orgulloso de ser tu hijo, a pesar de que no te enteres de nada. (21)

But the narrator is well aware that his writing comes “ya tarde” (66). He can only engage in a variety of what is called in Spanish “un diálogo de sordos,” for Julián, his faculty of memory erased, is no longer himself. Julián is unable to recall the incidents Gorka wishes to explain or process his son’s words. In fact, the reader may conclude, as the narrator himself suggests, that Gorka would never have written the confession – at least not with the same candor – had Julián actually been able to understand it. One may conclude that Gorka’s confession is marked by a degree of cowardice, but to do so would ignore the self-confrontation it involves.

The narrator makes clear the difficulty of speaking to his father while describing a fantasized sexual encounter with Ella. (There is some ambiguity as to whether the moment of fantasizing belongs to the book’s present tense or past, but Gorka’s smoking a cigarette as he imagines the scene situates it in his youth). The narrator asks himself of the passage “¿Te lo leería igualmente si supiera que lo entiendes de arriba abajo? Creo que no” (44). Yet, by reading it, the narrator makes a pair of discoveries. The first is the liberation that comes with being able to mention sexuality before his father, even in his compromised state, for Gorka laments constantly the repression of sexuality in his upbringing in a conservative family in a small conservative village. Secondly, the narration allows him to “dejar claro que la atracción sexual no fue lo que me movió a acceder” to Ella’s request for help (44). Earlier in the narration, the narrator relays that he had made a timid proposition to Ella, which she had rejected. Yet, the fantasized encounter, which recalls the trope of woman Basque national activist as tepid and

unfeminine, seen in other works such as *Días contados*, proves to be rather unsatisfactory.

As such, the narrator must search for other clues to explain why he transports the ETA activist. These motivations are repeated throughout the book, as on page 17: “el franquismo; lo turbulento de la época; la noticia de la redada que aquella mañana traían los periódicos; la energía que entonces me sobraba, volcada en el deseo de subvertir el mundo . . . mi relación contigo . . .” and “el extraño orgullo que me causaba que Ella me pidiera un favor.” The narrator explains later in the book that he feared police repression to such an extent that he avoided annotating the books he read, having been told that the police could interpret his notes as some sort of secret code (53). The narrator draws constant parallels between the father, a Carlist *requeté* in the war, and his home life, and the Franco regime (e.g., 79). These link Gorka’s nationalist activism to resistance to Franco, i.e. as a having its roots in the defeat of the Republic. Gorka’s need to obtain a “Certificado de Buena Conducta” (107) attest to the paternalistic, controlling nature of the Franco regime. The reader discovers along with Gorka a set of circumstances – none of them important enough by itself – that cause Gorka’s actions and make them understandable: the need to rebel against the regime and his father; ETA’s serving, in the wake of the Burgos trial, as a widely accepted outlet for anti-Francoism; Gorka’s attraction to Ella, even if a tepid one; a refusal to say no based on Gorka’s “complejo de inferioridad” (9). Testifying to his self-discovery, Gorka eventually concludes, “Que con quien estoy saldando viejas cuentas es conmigo mismo, no contigo” (69).

That Gorka is able to reach a degree of self-knowledge speaks to the productivity of memory and its narration. Yet, lack of an interlocutor, explicitly staged in the father’s

dementia, undermines the potential solidity of fact the narration might have been able to claim. That is to say, until the very end, in the epilogue by Agustín, there is nobody to listen to Gorka's narration and corroborate its truth, so that it is the project of individual subjectivity (even is influenced, as I will note below, by the collective memory).

Furthermore, in contrast to other novels of memory, the narrator uses his own mind as virtually the only source of memory, not recurring to witness accounts, documents, photos, or other artifacts. Like many of the other authors I have analyzed, testing out the epistemological limits of memory, Lertxundi has his narrator reflect on the imperfect human faculty of memory and the transformation narration imposes on memory. Despite Gorka's insistence that he is writing "una confesión" to his father, rather than a "novela," an assertion the reader recognizes as dubious, he insists on crafting a coherent, linear narrative, albeit one with flashbacks and fast-forwards. Novelistic coherence, as Gorka explicitly admits, requires conjecture and recreation.

Examining Gorka's method of memory will illustrate these points. Gorka, invoking the novelist Heinrich Böll, describes himself as "un cazador de instantes" (118). That is to say, he has stored perfectly certain instants in his "álbum de . . . memoria," but completely lost others (118). That which is stored, furthermore, is not equivalent to "una cadena de hechos" but rather "la apariencia que la imaginación de cada cual da a esos hechos. Y no además, a todos los hechos, sino a los pocos que conservamos en el desván de nuestra conveniencia" (117). The spatial metaphors Lertxundi uses (attic, album) implies a solidity that the author ultimately contradicts by invoking "imaginación" as that which gives form even to memories held with certainty. As Paul Ricoeur exposes, classical philosophy conceived of memory as involving an initial imprint at the time of

the event (storage of memory), and the moment of recall (bringing to mind). Gorka offers two slightly contradictory versions the storage of memory: in one, memory, more even than an imprint is a physically stored object; in the other, it is only imagination's projection of the object.

Bringing the stored image to mind involves further influence of the imagination. Ricoeur points out in his phenomenology of memory that the imagination is one of the "pitfalls" of memory, for "putting-into-images, bordering on the hallucinatory function of memory, constitutes a sort of weakness, a discredit, a loss of reliability of memory" (54). Thus Gorka's captured "instantes" pass through a double-filter of imagination, turning recollection into reconstruction.

Gorka in fact admits, after several pages of narrating his collaboration with the ETA "comando," that:

No soy capaz de recordar los pormenores de aquellos hechos gesto a gesto, palabra por palabra, suceso a suceso. Ni siquiera tengo claro si me enfrenté o no a Katxas. Tengo grabado el momento en que me llamó Cacapitán [in reference to the narrator's stutter], estoy viendo su burlona sonrisa. Pero ¿juraría que me enfrenté a él? Difícilmente. (117)

In the same passage, Gorka admits that a dialogue he has described as taking place between Katxas and Ella is also the result of reconstruction. His conviction that there was a romantic bond between the two ETA members is influenced by subsequent memories of how Ella behaved in later protests in honor of Katxas (118).

To the pitfalls of the narration of the past, Gorka adds the problem of perspective subjectivity. One of many episodes that illustrate the subjectivity of memory is that of Julián's estrangement from his mother, the details of which vary according to who tells them. Gorka's grandmother attributes their distancing to a dispute over an inheritance,

while his aunt blames the grandmother's repeated badmouthing of Gorka's mother, who has died in a car accident. Julián, in accordance with the silence that characterizes him, says nothing. Thus Gorka concludes, there are "Dos versiones incompatibles" (92-3) of the same circumstances.

The narrator admits that his own version of the ETA standoff, though based on his memory, has been informed by subsequent retellings from other perspective in the collective memory of his village. Often these retellings coincide with the facts as the narrator sees them, for example portraying Katxas as a heroic figure with "Cojones e inteligencia" (126). However, at times, the retellings amount to "Mera hagiografía" that incorporates anecdotes that take place in periods after Katxas's death (126). Once again, as we have seen in other novels, narrative form, in this case oral storytelling in honor of a renegade-hero, transforms the content.

Memory, then, turns out to be a needed, but indefinite substance. In making memory, one confronts the past and evaluates his own and his generation's actions. However, weakened by its flaws, memory, at least as Gorka practices, proves to be inadequate to "saldar las viejas deudas y quedar en paz . . ." (232), to sort through a past of violence and irresolute questions of moral responsibility. Perhaps it is because of this inadequacy that the past, not fully comprehended by Gorka, uncannily returns with lethal power.

Both the degree of guilt Gorka bears for transporting ETA members in his youth and the appropriateness of his response to ETA's final threat are left as question marks, despite the narrator's reflection. Lertxundi forces the reader to ask herself what Gorka should do when his father receives the letter of extortion. Is calling on Ella to act as an

intermediary completely justifiable, because it best assures his father's and his own safety while refusing to fund ETA activity? The solution of asking the enemy for help is humiliating for Gorka, who laments that "no se me ocurría otra solución" (189); the dire circumstance in which he finds himself seem to justify his imperfect solution. As for the more "heroic" options – by which we can infer publicly denouncing the extortion, "ninguna . . . ofrecía una solución. Al contrario" (189). But does Gorka have a duty, as a member of a democratic society, to uphold the law, and bring to light information that might prevent others from living through his own dilemma? Does one have the obligation to be heroic when faced with both injustice and direct threat?

Jesús Maravall's reappearance in Gorka's life elucidates the stakes of these questions, while pushing their solutions further into Todorov's gray zone. When the narrator refuses Maravall's requests for assistance with an article he is writing, on the "impuesto revolucionario," there is some truth to the accusations Maravall makes:

Según él, mi negativa a colaborar solo podía significar una cosa: complicidad. Añadió que nos perdía la cobardía. Que nuestro silencio no era sino un modo de encubrir la miseria moral. (219)

The reaction of Gorka, and especially of his friend the bartender Agustín, once the article is published, seems to confirm Maravall's criticism. Gorka, who blindly ignores the fact that he will be blamed for what his father has told the press, condemns Maravall, concluding that "no se pueden decir determinadas verdades. No, al menos, así" (236). Agustín goes further, dismissing Maravall as "un hijoputa" and advises against calling him to warn him that his life could be in danger because of the article (235-6).

Yet, Lertxundi places the counterargument against silence in the mouth of a man characterized by his hypocrisy, dishonesty, and prejudice. For, though he speaks out

against silence, Maravall shields himself in the anonymity of the pseudonym Salvador Aramendia, saying “no merecía la pena ensuciar el nombre de uno” (215). He dismisses the drama lived through by Gorka and his fellow Basques as “ridículas revoluciones de juguete de los vascos [que] proporcionan pingües beneficios a los periódicos” (214), and the Basque Country as uninhabitable for its “ambiente tan cutre, el aspecto de los pueblos . . . obsceno” (218). Finally, after promising to assure the safety of his sources, he recklessly endangers Gorka’s life.

Furthermore, the coexistence of temporal planes inherent in the novel of memory, which show the time-specific contingency of innocence and guilt, undermines the hardline anti-ETA rhetoric that Maravall (hypocritically) espouses. Gorka explicitly points out the temporal contingency of morality in relaying an episode that takes place in the Franco era, in which he is questioned and intimidated when his car is stopped at a police checkpoint. The narrator has in his car a half-drunken bottle of whiskey in the passenger seat, and papers in Euskera along with piles of books, magazines, and newspapers. As Gorka relays, the Civil Guard, presses him about the papers in Euskera but says nothing about the whiskey; under current law, the papers would be ignored while the whiskey would result in his arrest. Thus Gorka concludes: “culpa e inocencia se dirimen a la luz de lo pertinente en cada momento” (19).

Though Gorka quickly becomes disenchanted with ETA even as he is assisting the “commando,” the question of whether the narrator is culpable for having helped the organization is unsettled. His collaboration takes place at around the period of the Burgos Trial, when ETA was resisting a regime imposed by military force, when armed activists enjoyed strong support in the Basque Country and in the international community. In this

period, even the now-entrenched ETA opponent Maravall, then a member of the communist party, had defaced a wall in Madrid with ETA slogans.

When exactly then, does the flaw of complicity begin? Does it include Maravall's graffiti, scribbled in his youth? Or Agustín's sheltering of Gorka the night after he transports the ETA members? Lertxundi's novel offers a pained and introspective, but clear denunciation of silence, both the silence that acts as a barrier between Gorka and his father, which is never broken, and the silence that protects violence. Yet, dissatisfied with the shrill, simplistic, and prejudiced morality of a Jesús Maravall, he leaves as a gray area the ethics of how and when one must confront political violence. Lertxundi rejects the extreme, "heroic" solution as both misguided and the product of a set of biases, and yet appears to be sharply critical of Gorka's solution. The narrator of *Dirty Laundry*, representative of his generation, according to the author, is caught between currents of nationalism and antinationalism, neither program offering him a solution for the final dilemma. Novelistic writing for Lertxundi proves apt for discovering the implication of the dilemma of the limits between, silence, self-preservation, collaboration, and complicity, rather than for finding the ultimate answer.

4.5. Conclusion

My object in this chapter has been to analyze Basque novels of memory on their own terms, in the context of a differentiated historical memory. What then, makes such novels different from their Spanish counterparts? The answer does not lie in a Basque aesthetic school. It does seem that these novels tend more often than those of other literatures toward the "Nueva Novela Histórica" as defined by Kortazar and Luengo. But

the use of memory structures, distortion of events, subjectivity, and non-linear chronology is by no means unique to the Basque novel. What I hope to have shown is that the novels respond not to universal or universal Spanish history, but to the historical events (described in chapter 3) as they took place in the Basque area. More importantly, they respond to the ways in which cultural memory has made sense of the past (also described in chapter 3) – as being especially relevant to Basque culture because of its basis on an anciently spoken language, and as being determinative of the still open question of autonomy.

What I have found is a greater instance of challenging all discourses of authority, including those that most unambiguously celebrate Basque culture, even though memory and the Basque language serve foundational purposes, and even though Basque literature itself is arguably in a foundational stage. Izaguirre uses the Civil War past to make his protagonist both a marginal and heroic figure, but one who resists collective resistance. Uribe shows his town/village past to be constitutive of his narrator, but exposes its mythical elements by linking them to a global past and scrutinizing to what point the Civil War was a defense against a Spanish invasion. Finally, Lertxundi shows to what extent separatist violence, legacy of the irresolution of the Basque question, remains to be critically examined. All three novels represent memory, despite again the great weight that rests upon it, as being the opposite of solid. I have argued that the challenge to memory and authority stems from both a need for literature to assert its autonomy and, perhaps paradoxically, for Basque literature to represent its culture on the world stage. The tendency may serve also to cipher the still irresolute nature of the Basque culture and nation, marked as it is by polarization.

5

DOUBLE FIGURES IN THE PERIPHERAL NOVEL OF MEMORY

Un pensament de frontera que serveix per entendre dues realitats diferenciades, una manera de fer, d'actuar, de ser, de sentir, d'estimar, una manera de buscar la felicitat a cavall entre dos mons.

Najat El Hachmi
Jo també sóc catalana

5.1. Introduction

Asked in an interview about his initiation into the world of literature in Euskera, the novelist Ramon Saizarbitoria recalled clandestine encounters with other writers and supporters of Basque culture, encounters he never discussed with his “normal” “Sunday friends.” He concludes, “Siempre he vivido dos mundos muy distintos: la escuela y el mundo ‘normal’ que conocí a su alrededor, y el mundo en torno al euskera” (108). Since the arrival of democracy, Basque and other minority cultures no longer have to hide underground. But Saizarbitoria’s anecdote remains a provocative starting point for the current chapter’s inquiry. As Saizarbitoria’s formulation suggests, speaking two languages means simultaneously living in two worlds. Writers of the Spanish peripheries can be seen as either possessing two cultures or as being especially sensitive to interaction between cultures.

In the current, final chapter of this study, I examine three novels that reflect (or reflect on) the experience Saizarbitoria describes of inhabiting two worlds. I analyze *Soinujolearen semea* (2004; *El hijo del acordeonista* in the Spanish translation; published in English as *The Accordionist’s Son*), by the Basque author Bernardo Atxaga, *Les veus del Pamano* (2004; translated into Spanish as *Las voces del Pamano*; *Voices of the River Pamano*), by the Catalan Jaume Cabré, and *Home sen nome* (2006; translated into Spanish as *Hombre sin nombre*; *Man without a Name*) by the Galician Suso de Toro. By analyzing how these authors narrate the past, I wish to explore the possibility of a

perspective of difference, a poetics shaped by an alternative view of history and identity. Looking beyond the case of the Basque Country I explored in the last two chapters, how may we theorize more generally a peripheral approach to literature of memory? Is there a set of strategies that characterize those works written in the non-central Iberian languages? What, in short, make the peripheral novel different from the “Spanish” one?

There is, of course, nothing resembling a single peripheral aesthetic. We have already seen the heterogeneity just within Basque literature. Nor do novels published in the minority languages necessarily bear a stamp of local culture, other than the language in which they are written. Cultural difference is not necessarily thematized in peripheral novels, and peripheral authors are just as likely to use references to international works as to works of other writers in their own language. To use an example from the current chapter, Suso de Toro borrows from the classical traditions of Europe in *Home sen nome*, directly or indirectly quoting, among other works, *El burlador de Sevilla*, Zorilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio*, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, the writing of Nietzsche, Calderón’s *La vida es sueño*, and Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*. Neither language nor nationality need be the primary organizing category of literature. The presence of anti-nationalist peripheral thinkers like Juaristi or Azurmendi remind us that there are also many ways in which writers may conceptualize their culture and its autonomy.

Furthermore, in speaking of the peripheral literatures, one cannot lose sight of the great variation between the minority languages and their literature and culture. I have cited previously Deleuze and Guattari’s theory that each individual piece of writing takes on greater collective importance in the minor literatures. How different then is the repercussion of writing a novel like *Hestoria universal de Paniceiros* in Asturian (Bable),

a language spoken by approximately 100,000 in Spain according to some estimates, versus a novel like *Pa negre* in Catalan, a language spoken by millions! (And how more quiet the echo of the former outside the borders of its linguistic community versus that of the latter.) Publishing statistics give a broad indication of the relative robustness of the three largest of the national minority languages; of the 76,000 books published in Spain in 2010, 78.8 percent were written in Spanish, 10.4 percent in Catalan, 1.9 percent in Galician, and 1.1 in Basque “(Desciende la producción de libros editados en España en 2010”). The relative strength of Catalan literature, in line with the far greater population of Catalan speakers, vis-à-vis the Galician and Basque equivalents is obvious.

The sociological context of the use of the three languages is similarly varied, as Jesús Burgueño describes in his well-documented “El mapa escondido: las lenguas en España.” Catalan, at least in the Catalan Autonomous Community and Andorra, enjoys the greatest health among Iberian minority languages according to Burgueño’s criteria, as the only one with an “alto nivel de presencia en los medios de comunicación,” “alta consideración social de la lengua propia,” and status as “Lengua vehicular de la escuela” (186). By comparison, Basque in the CAV and Basque-speaking regions of Navarra and Galician in Galicia enjoy only medium-to-low media presence, high-to-medium social prestige, and “importante presencia” as a language of the schools (Burgueño 186). This still puts Basque and Galician use in those territories well ahead of their use elsewhere (such as the Basque and Catalan-speaking areas within France), or other languages such as Asturian, with far less government protection, lower social prestige, and less use in media and the schools.

The number of speakers of the three languages, an indicator of their future viability, also varies greatly. Reliable, comparable statistics are difficult to ascertain, since different methods and categories of competency are used in different studies; moreover, because competency is so much easier for Spanish-speakers to achieve in other romance languages, the relevance of competency rate is entirely different in the Basque Country than in Galicia or Catalonia. That 91 percent of the population of Galicia has an “alto conocimiento” of Galician (Burgueño 186) does not necessarily mean that this proportion speaks the language as their first tongue – or at all. By way of an imperfect comparison, the encyclopedia *Ethnologue*, sets the number of competent speakers of Catalan at 5 million, of Galician at 3.2 million, and of Basque at 660,000. Judging from these numbers, and from Burgueño’s observations on media use and social prestige, the difference between the ability of Catalan versus Basque writers to make a living solely in their own language is obvious.

The observations I have made about Basque literature and literary history in chapters 3 and 4 cannot be applied to Catalan or Galician literature either. As we have seen, pre-19th-century literature in Basque was the product of isolated cases of cultivation of the language by clergymen, and is often held in little esteem by writers and critics. In contrast, both Catalan and Galician have robust traditions of “high” literature dating back to the Middle Ages. In roughly the same era that Latin gave way to Romance as the language of administration and culture at the impulse of Alfonso X (Wright 343), Galician-Portuguese and Catalan literatures developed in parallel to Castilian literature. Galician, perhaps because of the cultural prestige of the pilgrimage destination Santiago de Compostela, was the *lingua franca* of lyric poetry in Galicia, Castile, and León

(Videira Lopes 398). Alfonso X's *Cantigas* famously bears testimony to this reality.

Basque was never the vehicle of active literary exchange prior to the nineteenth century.

There is no Basque equivalent of Ramon Lull, or Joanot Martorell, author of *Tirant lo Blanc*.

Still, as has been extensively studied, with the rise of Castilian political power, the other languages of the peninsula lost much of their prestige, so that by the Renaissance period writers of Galician or Catalan origin were far more likely to express themselves in Castilian than in the local tongues. As Vicent Salvador summarizes, by the 16th century "Catalan no longer had the creative vigor of the previous century" (432). Galician, which would see even less frequent and less prestigious uses in literature after the Middle Ages, was "backgrounded . . . during the 15th century" (Wright 348). Parallel, Romantic-influenced movements would initiate the creation of a significant body of "high" literature in Galician and Catalan. Galician participants in the "*Rexurdimento*," commonly associated with Rosalía de Castro, saw themselves as overcoming the "*séculos escuros*." As Salvador summarizes, eminent participants in the Catalan "*Renaixença*" used the term "*decadència*" "to contrast [the production of the last few centuries] with the cultural awakening they represented" (436).

This more recent flowerings of literature in the vernaculars is of more direct relevance to today's literatures, since it established precedents for authors and began shaping the role of literature in the contemporary minority cultures. Contrasting the respective re-establishments of the minority literatures will illustrate the different challenges faced by authors of the different tongues. Olaziregi describes Basque literature of the 19th and pre-war 20th centuries, as remaining "[b]ajo la sombra del

costumbrismo,” the province of a small group tied to *fuero* and, subsequently, nationalism (“Narrativa vasca”). In contrast, Catalan was the vehicle of vibrant, urban and urbane literature on a significant scale (for characteristics, see for example Resina “The Catalan *Renaixença*,” “Modernism in Catalonia,” “*Noucentisme*,” and “The Catalan Avant-Garde”). Catalan’s initial “re-birth” represented, as Resina writes, “the growing self-assertion of social groups whose recently achieved economic hegemony required cultural and historical legitimation” (“The Catalan *Renaixença*” 470). Galician, like Basque, despite the high profile of Rosalía de Castro, remained a tongue associated with ethnic expression, rather than the vehicle of communication of a rising economic elite and of writers on the vanguard of European currents. Though the use of Catalan and Galician was curtailed in the Franco years, writers in these languages did not face the same challenge as the generation of Basque writers active in the transition of founding a literature and establishing a literary language. Regardless of the direct relevance of Joan Maragall, Castelao, or Rosalía de Castro to contemporary writers’ work, the “rarity of talents” or lack of “masters” that Deleuze and Guattari see as characteristic of minor literature (17) does not easily apply to the Catalan and Galician cases. The need for translation in order to establish the basic conventions of narration, discussed by Lertxundi, is not as relevant to the other tongues. There are many other salient differences between Catalan, Basque, and Galician language and literature, such as the relative strengths of nationalist movements (greater in Catalonia and the Basque Country), or the class associations and symbolic resonance of the languages. For reasons of scope, I cannot explore all these variations.

Still, there exist obvious, significant parallels between Basque, Catalan, and Galician literatures relevant to the current study. Language being, as Llobera argues, a “primordial indication of identity” (86), these literatures make use of the primary marker of a differentiated identity. They put to work languages that have faced centuries of marginalization by deliberate political policy and other mechanisms that place minority languages at a disadvantage versus larger ones. As we have seen, the advantages of writing in Spanish versus minority languages is subject to debate, given the promotional organs of the autonomous regional governments, but writers in Basque, Catalan, and Galician ally themselves with smaller systems. Absent translation, they exclude themselves from the 45 million potential Spanish-speaking readers of Spain (and more beyond). In many senses, these literatures occupy subordinated positions to the Spanish one. The international success of Atxaga, for example, has been filtered through Spanish institutions: publication in Alfaguara, the publicity of winning the Premio Nacional de Narrativa, translations into English by Margaret Jull Costa of the Spanish versions of his works. To give another example, Joseba Sarrionandia, conversely, is cited often by Basque writers and critics as one of the most important authors in Euskera, but, perhaps because of his peculiar biography (imprisonment for ties to ETA, escape, and long, at-first involuntary exile), has never had any of his fiction translated into Spanish. As a result, he is completely unknown outside of Spain, or even outside the Basque Country.

For Pascale Casanova, belonging to a “small” or “dominated” literature delimits the strategies authors have at their disposal to achieve recognition. As she writes in her impressively documented *The World Republic of Letters*, such writers, “though they are separated by linguistic and cultural traditions and appear to be opposed to one another in

every respect, nevertheless have in common everything that a shared structural relationship to a central literary power implies” (176). We might expect that writers of the Spanish peripheries may share even more in common with each other given that they belong to stateless nations sharing a similar relationship to the same center. Furthermore, as Mario Santana argues, “Literary life in these communities does not feed exclusively on a monolingual literature, but their cultural life is grounded on the interweaving of a multilingual existence” (167). The Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia, in summary, are peripheries of the same center are all to different extents bilingual in Spanish, and share the same stage of state politics and state culture.

The world’s “dominated” writers, Casanova finds, have not the degree of autonomy as those in dominant ones: “they have to make an unavoidably painful choice: either to affirm their difference and so condemn themselves to the difficult and uncertain fate of national writers . . . writing in “small” literary languages that are hardly, or not at all recognized in the international world; or to betray their heritage and, denying their difference, assimilate the values of one of the great literary centers” (180). However, the imposed choice between assimilation and differentiation involves not only “literary poverty” but “literary greatness, and the invention of literary freedom” (Casanova 181).

The creation of non-conventional literature by peripheral writers may be said to result from this invention of literary freedom. Joseba Sarrionandia notes that Basque authors during the end of Francoism wrote literature of the “*vanguardia*,” for theirs was a counter-culture, allied against anything mainstream as defined by the state (Etxeberria 21). Saizarbitoria too notes his participation in the “*vanguardia*” (Etxeberria 113); as a writer in a minoritized tongue, he wished to create literature of symbolic value rather than

to sell books. Out of rejection for Spanish state culture, he absorbed French and international models. Sarrionandia's and Saizarbitoria's experience fits Casanova's theory that the peripheral position, having to battle to "gain admission to . . . central precincts" is "the most sensitive to the newest aesthetic inventions of international literature" (43).

Sensitivity to new aesthetics may explain why many peripheral authors write what Kortazar, following Ana Luengo, calls the "Nueva novela histórica" ("Memoria y Guerra Civil" 13), characterized by self-conscious reconstruction of the past from the present tense, non-linear narration, doubt about the possibility of "truth," and fragmentary, perspectivist narration. In any case, as Sebastiaan Faber shows in his thoughtful article comparing Atxaga with another writer of what was once a peripheral territory, Jorge Luis Borges, metafictional experimentation takes on a different significance for peripheral writers. The bold act of seizing the tradition of the center, grasping it perfectly, and manipulating it, as Atxaga does with the *1001 Nights* structure, subverts the center-periphery hierarchy (Faber, "El mundo" 520). The non-hierarchical structure of *Obakoak*, lacking "principio organizador," entails not only a search for a new aesthetic, but also "socava toda noción de un centro" (523). (The same can be said, as we have seen, of *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, or about other books structured exclusively around an irresolute search for the past, like Suso de Toro's *Sete palabras* or Carme Riera's *La meitat de l'ànima*.)

In the current chapter I will compare the narrative strategies that Atxaga, Cabré, and Toro use in their novels, identifying the common points. I do so not to join them into a school defined by shared influence, but rather to compare how they approach, from

comparable positions, the question of remembering and group identity. As I have been arguing in the previous chapters, the peripheral cultures to which these authors belong challenge the narrative of memory of a unitary Spain. As David Gies summarizes, citing Hutcheon:

If what we commonly believe to be a nation emerges from a shared heritage of “linguistic, cultural, political, and social values to which we must assent,” then Spain is a nation, an entity which holds on to a generally shared heritage. It is, however, a hotly contested heritage, as we know from those in (particularly) the País Vasco or Catalonia who do not fully share that heritage. They elbow in and assert their own “national” identity politics. . . . (9)

Gies goes on to assert that the results of these claims often are “informative, useful, and enriching,” raising questions such as

where does the border begin to form between a shared national heritage and a localized, individual heritage? How much of the latter rewrites the former? To what degree can these contested areas co-exist? Are hegemony and, concurrently, cultural imperialism the inevitable end products of a shared heritage? (9)

In the current chapter I will identify the ways in which Atxaga, Cabré’s, and Toro’s novels address these questions.

Mario Santana rightly points out that Hispanism and Catalanism – and I would add by extension the writers they study – occupy a “privileged position” “to account for the existence of complex identities” (168). Globalization has meant the acceleration of movement of people, goods, and ideas, with the resulting increase in contact between disparate ethnic, national, and linguistic communities. Migration has created new contexts for identity creation. The Spanish peripheries have long been sites of such cultural and linguistic negotiation. Since the advent of regionalist and nationalist movements, and before, writers of these territories have theorized the existence and

production of difference. Contemporary peripheral writers, faced with the bind Casanova describes, are in a privileged position to understand the discursive strategies of expressing identity and to reinscribe them.

Cabré and especially Toro and Atxaga make explicit that the novelistic world they represent belong to a differentiated culture. However, their novels call into question the solidity of memory – its reliability, its desirability – as a primary factor of differentiated identity. They furthermore emphasize how identity is produced not always by memory and tradition, but by encounter with an *other*. The other in these novels is not discreetly separate, however, overlapping and merging with the self, representing how contact can both create conflict and new identities.

Homi Bhabha has famously conceptualized the construction of identity by interstitial groups as the negotiation of new hybridity rather than the articulation of essences, providing a framework for analyzing how peripheral writers represent their groups. For Bhabha, “The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities. . . . The ‘right’ to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness . . .” (3).

The analogy to the Spanish peripheries is an imperfect one, for in the above quote Bhabha describes internationally displaced migrants, those often occupying marginal positions in their host societies. In contrast, the peripheral cultures have developed *in situ* over centuries, even if their affirmation as national communities is both incomplete and

relatively recent. Furthermore, those claiming Basque, Catalan, and Galician identity occupy every social rank within their societies.

In more general terms, the applicability of post-colonial theory to the Spanish peripheries is a fraught question, given the democratic freedoms enjoyed in these territories and their long history of cultural miscegenation. Stewart King provides an excellent analysis of the question in his essay on the controversy over the invitation of Catalan culture to the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair and whether writing in Castilian can be considered Catalan literature. As King documents, a number of Catalan intellectuals of nationalist tendency described the relation between Spain and Catalonia as one of colonization, in which Catalan writers using Castilian collude, deliberately or not, with the forcible eradication of Catalan. Yet, as King writes, “Catalonia could not be said to have experienced the conquest, political domination and economic exploitation typical of colonized countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Catalonia is, after all, one of the wealthiest and most industrialized regions of Spain and benefited economically from Spain’s control of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, until 1898, when Spain lost its remaining colonies in a war with the United States (255). On the other hand, as King writes, “it can be argued that Catalonia has been dominated politically, culturally and linguistically by the Spanish State, which has, at times, used violence in its quest to maintain territorial and cultural unity” (255). Joseba Gabilondo, in an interesting analysis of this question, proposes that “Catalan, Basque, and Galician (unlike Asturiano or Aragonese), retain a double historicity that is simultaneously colonial/subaltern and modern/colonialists [sic]” (“The Impossibility” 15).

In any case, settling this question will not be the point of my analysis. Rather, I am interested in how authors experience the results of the encounters, encounters often marred by conflict and dominance, between cultural or territorial blocs. As King summarizes, “Rather than focus on recovering an original, pre-colonial culture that has been adulterated through contact with the colonizing culture, Bhabha argues for a third space, that is, a new hybrid space which is formed by the convergence of two or more cultures” (259).

Atxaga, Toro, and Cabré represent the inhabitation of this third space at the border between cultures by featuring liminal recollectors of national memory, those with overlapping or multiple selves. Beyond the author’s leading positions within their respective literary systems, a number of common traits makes the three novels fertile ground for comparison and a search for an other narrative of the Iberian peripheries. These include their epic sweep, which takes their plots from a period beginning roughly at the start of the Spanish Civil War and ending in the present, covering the key episodes of the foundation of contemporary Iberian identities: the War, dictatorship, and transition.

The three authors were born in the 1940s or 1950s, one to two decades after the Civil War, and thus, when narrating that conflict, reconstruct a past that they did not live directly. The construction of what Marianne Hirsch calls “postmemory,” with its reliance on sources other than lived experience, gives rise to these novels’ exploration of how a semanticized past is set into text. The novels share also self-conscious framings in which history is unearthed by their characters, often writers, and an approach to the past that fuses it to the now and makes its effects present. The inclusion of the act of remembering (with an emphasis on writing it) in these works, in which protagonists react to past events

or struggle to prevent them from fading into oblivion, opens these novels to inquiries into the lapse-plagued mechanisms and subjectivity of memorialization. The foundational value of the past to peripheral cultures makes the question of how it is narrated a pressing one. For Suso de Toro, for example, the Civil War was “the *Big Bang* que fundó el mundo de mis padres, en el que yo nací.” In writing about the conflict, he says, “Lo que he intentado es conocer quiénes fundaron el mundo en que yo nací” (Hermida).

Benedict Anderson casts the imagined community’s need for a narrative of origin/past in psychological terms, comparing it to the estrangement that must be overcome of the self conceiving his person-hood vis-à-vis childhood photographs, that is, confronted with a past consciousness no longer available for direct recollection. The three novels, with multifaceted remembering narrators that dissolve boundaries of self, time, gender, and literary genre, render the search for a common past ultimately impossible. The novels feature investigations, that is attempts at recovery, that are ultimately discarded or have some destructive results. In Atxaga’s text, the narrator, David, diagnosed as an acute nostalgic for a lost world, risks slipping further into melancholia and isolation with his investigation of the past and his writing. In Cabré’s novel, the protagonist Fontelles’s own son has no interest in knowing his father’s past (or his own true identity); the text compiled by the character Tina Bros is ultimately deliberately erased. In Toro’s novel, the photographs of the war victims are destroyed because, though they are the only remaining physical traces of sought-for victims’ past, they are also the final mark of their indignity; thus in this case history’s losers are honored by their forgetting rather than remembering. The three novels do accept a need for memory. Cabré, in an interview I conducted with him, made explicit his intent to right “la

tergiversación de la historia” as written by the winners, and his desire to vindicate a truer-to-the-facts counter-history. But the novelistic genre, which, as Bakhtin writes, tends toward a heteroglossia that resists language’s inhabitation by monological programs, points toward problems in the project of remembrance.

My analysis will compare Atxaga, Cabré, and Toro’s use of multiple narrators and double figures and the doubts the authors, despite their defense of local difference, cast on stable narratives of memory, with their identity-building potential. I propose that the three share, if not a peripheral poetics, a common perspective and set of strategies. Through the use of double narrators, they show that they understand keenly existence in the third space between cultures and the discourses that define or produce cultures on either side. Using this awareness, they self-consciously manipulate conventional genres of historical fiction. Through the use of coexisting opposite perspectives, they question whether narratives of memory construction can accurately preserve and recreated the past and successfully honor history’s victims.

5.2 Atxaga’s Bilingual Perspective

The author of *Soinujolearen semea*, or *El hijo del acordeonista*, is without question the giant of Basque literature, recognized as the leading figure inside and outside the Basque Country. It is accurate to say that for the non-specialist, as Mark Aldrich has put it, “discussions of contemporary Basque literature inevitably involve consideration of the work of Bernardo Atxaga” (182). This is so despite the author’s having protested for decades, as he did in a 1989 interview, “Yo no estoy solo en la literatura vasca. Sin

ningún sonrojo puedo citar a 10 autores que ya han publicado obras notables o están en el camino de hacerlo” (Larrauri).

The extensive bibliography on Bernardo Atxaga (the literary pseudonym of Joseba Irazu) and his works, especially relative to other Basque authors, bears testimony to the critical attention he has attracted. These include four book-length monographs, one by Kortazar, two by Olaziregi (one a didactic textbook), and another by a critic outside the circle of Basque literary criticism, José Ángel Ascunce Arrieta. Atxaga has also been the subject of numerous articles by Basque, Spanish, and Anglophone critics.

As discussed above, Atxaga was actively involved in the post-dictatorship revival of Basque culture, worked for by artists and intellectuals who banded together in groups to publish literature, start cultural magazines, or organize events. Though long a writer of short stories, novellas, and poetry, his first longer piece, *Obabakoak* (1988), propelled him into his undisputed position as the leading and most international of the Basque writers. The book earned Atxaga the Spanish Premio Nacional de Narrativa and was favorably reviewed in *The New York Times* (by a critic who, famously, described it as being “as Spanish as *paella*”).

Most of Atxaga’s fiction is either set inside or protagonized by characters from Obaba, a fictional rural town loosely based on his own native Asteasu, Gipuzkoa. His focus on representing the rural heartland of Basqueness, frequent reworking of *costumbrismo*, and portrayal of separatist violence has led to the perception of Atxaga as, as the writer Iñaki Uriarte puts it, “representante étnico (aunque no nacionalista) del país” (27). This is an incomplete perception when it fails to take into account Atxaga’s problematization of symbols of Basque identity, however. A number of literary critics

have focused precisely on Atxaga's proposals for rethinking identity. For example, in an insightful study of *El hijo del acordeonista*, Txetxu Aguado rightly points out that Atxaga validates certain aspects of traditional perception of identity while ultimately stressing the role of discursive discovery and construction through communication:

[L]a identidad local vasca propuesta por el autor tiene un regusto a tierra, lengua y etnia, pero ninguno de ellos la vacían de los demás, y ni siquiera los tres juntos la agotan. . . . [N]o se trata de descubrir lo que ya somos, de afirmarlo una vez más en su inmutabilidad, como de descubrir y construir lo que queremos ser. . . . Comunicación, entonces, como el potencial para descubrirse, para entremezclarse, para reconocerse en la distancia y proponer el intercambio. (90-1)

Critics (for example Ascunce), have divided Atxaga's work into two tendencies. The first, marked by metafiction and/or fantasy, includes *Obabakoak*, and the short novels *Bi anai* (*Two Brothers*), and *Behi euskaldun baten memoriak* (*Memoirs of a Basque Cow*), the latter two of which have periodically been read as juvenile literature, perhaps because of the naïve narrative voice. The second style is the realism of the novels *Zazpi etxe Frantzian* (*Seven Houses in France*), *Gizona bere bakardadean* (*The Lone Man*), and *Zeru horiek* (*The Lone Woman*), the latter two dealing directly with the Basque Country's political conflict. In truth, all of Atxaga's works contain some fusion of both threads. In the *The Lone Man*, for example, the interior voices of family members or former comrades flood the protagonist's mind, creating a perspectivist dialogue within one character, and leaving the reader uncertain if the author is representing madness or a visitation of ghosts. *The Accordionist's Son*, as has been pointed out elsewhere, most obviously fuses the two tendencies. Though lacking any fantastic elements, the book acts as both a chronicle of a small village world and an investigation of writing and communication.

Another constant in Atxaga's prose is its direct, frank, narrative voice, its deceptive simplicity, even when used in formal experimentation. The writer José María Guelbenzu describes well the effect Atxaga achieves, while pointing to its symbolic dimension:

[E]s una sencillez propia de una escritura fundacional, de una escritura que actúa como si fuera la primera vez que algo se cuenta. Naturalmente que no es así, a estas alturas no podría ser así; de hecho, en la narrativa de Atxaga hay una deuda muy fuerte con la narración popular, con los cuentos populares, lo que remite, a su vez, a la tradición de la oralidad Si a ello añadimos que la literatura vasca ha sido hasta hace nada territorio casi exclusivo de curas y bersolaris, la noción de literatura fundacional aplicada a la obra de Bernardo Atxaga adquiere aun más peso y, sobre todo, más sentido. (48)

As we shall see, Atxaga counterbalances the foundational tone and significance of his writing, and the foundational scope of *The Accordionist's Son*, with self-consciousness that contradicts the revelatory truth of foundational myth.

The novel was well received by readers, selling 15,000 copies in Basque even prior to its first translation into Spanish (Publica 'El hijo del acordeonista'). Excepting Ignacio Echevarría's (misguided) review in *Babelia*, which judging from his subsequent attacks on Grupo Prisa (the owner of *El País* and Alfaguara), may have stemmed as much from prior conflicts with his employer as from his reading of the book, the novel was also reviewed well by critics. (See for example Joanne Lucena's review in *Hispania*, Jon Kortazar's in *Revista de libros de la Fundación Caja Madrid*, and Ricardo Senabre's in *El Cultural*.)

By way of summary, the book takes the form of an autobiography written by the protagonist David, an Obaba native who lives in exile running a horse ranch in Three Rivers, California with his wife and two daughters. The primary episodes in the

autobiography include: David's youth in Obaba, his discovery of the town's history in the Civil War and his father's participation on the Franco side, David's participation in armed separatist resistance, his quick disenchantment, and his subsequent life in the United States, including the courtship of his wife, May Ann. Framing the autobiography is the first-person narration of Joseba, a professional writer and David's childhood friend (and brother figure) from Obaba. Joseba's narration, set in 1999, begins after David's death from cancer. After reading David's book, which is written in Euskera, with the blessing of Mary Ann, who hopes to read an eventual translation, Joseba decides to re-write the autobiography in order to improve the narration. The book is thus the end product of this collaboration: the re-written autobiography (which includes a pair of short stories by David), Joseba's direct first-person framing (9-25), and a trio of inserted (437-62) short stories by Joseba.

Joseba's description of the project reflects Atxaga's relating of self-conscious investigation of fictional writing to traditional modes of expression. Joseba likens his method of re-writing to that of the carving (23-4); these are drawings and messages scratched into trees by early Basque immigrant shepherds in the American west. Carvings serve as a metaphor for story telling in general and for the palimpsestic writing in particular, since, historically, shepherds would re-carve faded carvings, deepening the original lines or adding their own. The metaphor thus reproduces the postmodern interest in collective writing and unreliable narration, unreliable in the case of the novel since as readers we do not know the extent of Joseba's editing. Atxaga's use of the metaphor also typifies his sophisticated re-writing of Basque culture. Selecting from a stock of traditional folk practices, he finds one that is fairly well known but to my knowledge has

never been discussed in fictional writing. Then, he not only “updates” traditional culture by using it to better understand contemporary ideas about writing, but also shows that what we think of as postmodern in fact has its roots in ageless practices of writing and recording.

Four extended critical studies to date focus on questions of metafiction/intertextuality and of memory in *El hijo del acordeonista*. Aguado’s, mentioned above, sees the book’s self-conscious focus on narration as a means of investigating how Basque identity is produced discursively as a potential ideal. Jon Kortazar performs a thorough close reading that identifies the work’s intertextual references, analyzing the novel as containing “two fundamental objectives: first, the creation of a historical tapestry which recounts the sentimental education of a young man in the last years of fascism and early years of the transition period, and second, the creation of emotion centered on a world (traditional and primitive) that is coming apart under the pressures of new ways of life . . .” (*Bernardo Atxaga* 66). In his comparison of *The Accordionist’s Son* to Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *El jinete polaco*, Iñigo Barbancho Galdós asserts that, because the novel narrates a past not experienced by the author, it “semanticizes the past,” turning Obaba into a space made out of language rather than real material; this semanticization is emphasized by the fact that the narrator recalls but never returns to Obaba. In another essay on the novel, “El paraíso insuficiente: El hijo del acordeonista: ecos clásicos en una novela postmoderna,” Barbancho Galdós fleshes out points of contact (and postmodern borrowing) between Atxaga’s novel and Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

My reading will focus on the novel's use of double figures as the means of representing contact between cultures, languages, and ideologies, as well as memory's multiple functions and limitations. Though memory serves in *El hijo del acordeonista* as a means of preservation of an endangered world, it threatens to act as a trap as well. Atxaga proposes that memory requires a way out from isolation via communication; however, the act of communication through language alters the content of memory, limiting its capacity to preserve.

Atxaga, as I have been discussing, has acted as a champion for the cause of Basque language, culture and literature. However, in a research interview I held with him, Atxaga added another motivation to the ever-repeated question of why he writes in Basque, beyond supporting a minority tongue, and his personal attachments and years of honing his literary use of the language. Speaking Basque, he said, means living in a productive linguistic tension:

Me agarro a la lengua minoritaria porque tengo la sospecha de que todo lo que yo he hecho en la vida está relacionado con esa tensión entre las dos lenguas. Y que . . . esa es mi riqueza . . . esa es mi experiencia. Esa es la experiencia significativa, y es . . . el problema sobre el cual yo he construido todas mis reflexiones. . . . Me ocurre muchas veces en congresos de literatura, en una mesa redonda: yo pienso diferente del resto de la mesa redonda, y creo que tiene que ver con que yo soy un escritor bilingüe en el sentido estricto del término.

The abundance of double figures incarnates the confluence of ways of speaking and thinking. In general, the use of double figures is easily perceived by the reader (though some require a closer reading to observe), but are worked seamlessly into the novel, in contrast, for example, to the perspectivism of Ramón Pérez de Ayala's *Belarmino y Apolonio* (1921), with its series of overt, repetitive contrasts. Many of the book's main episodes result directly from a decades-long conflict between two sides: the

Republicans and Basque nationalists versus the *franquistas* and other subsequent representatives of a centralized Spanish political, military, and economic authority. The book includes two primary narrators and a protagonist with two father figures. David is caught between two environments, two sets of friends, and two love interests – one of each in the Obaba center, and one in its rural outpost, Iruain. He sees the world through two pairs of eyes – a naïve pair and an accusatory pair capable of discovery the hidden past. David organizes his life, and marks its phases, with two sets of lists. He has two space of bucolic refuge, Iruain, and Stoneham Ranch, in the United States. After arranging objects into doubles, Atxaga provides multiple versions of how the same object or set of events can be conceived. At times, one half of the double is further stratified into smaller units.

In David's autobiographical narration, the Spanish/Basque divide to an extent serves to arrange halves of the sets of doubles, with David straddling both but favoring the latter. The rural-Basque/urban-Spanish dichotomy is ultimately broken down in the novel, but at first David, and by extension his narration, affirm it. David's school principal diagnoses him as suffering from "*misanthropía*", and a psychologist as holding an excessive "apego . . . por el mundo rural" (66), or as David himself puts it, "nostalgia" (67). The narrator divides his time between the two worlds: on the one hand, the small-town but relatively urban center of Obaba and his home of Villa Lecuona, on the other, the space he prefers, the Virgilian-bucolic Iruain, an isolated neighborhood named after Juan Imaz's *caserío*, home to shepherds and woodcutters, ringed in by mountains and forests. (Obaba reflects the layout of villages in rural Gipuzkoa, which unlike the dense towns of Castille or Navarra, are spread out and divided by neighborhood).

Physically just three kilometers by a country road, Iruain is temporally speaking eons away from the town center. The country-folk there belong not only to the past, but also to “otra patria” (68). By preserving words of the past, the *campesinos* act as reservoir of endangered Basqueness: “Miraban los sacos llenos de manzanas y decían, distinguiendo cada clase: ‘Ésta, *espuru*’, ‘ésta, *domentxa*’, ‘ésta, *gezeta*’. Miraban a las mariposas que se movían de aquí para allá, y no dudaban: ‘Ésta, *mitxirrika*’, ‘aquella, *txoleta*’, ‘aquella otra, *inguma*’” (69). In contrast, Obaba reproduces urban functions on a small scale. The town center is home to the area’s bourgeois class of business owners and the politically connected who have seized property or privilege in the war, like David’s father. David’s family home, Villa Lecuona, is an industrial center, albeit minuscule, with a 50-square-meter textile workshop. Obaba’s social center, the hotel Alaska, is the site of David’s formal schooling and of entertainment prototypical of modern Spanish disco-bar culture. (The young people of Obaba, as well as foreign tourists staying at the hotel, gather for weekly parties during which David plays the accordion.)

David’s father complains to him “aún no sabes a qué ambiente perteneces” (67) and, indeed, David favors the rural world but does not fully belong to it. As he writes in his autobiography, despite his attachment to Iruain, “Lo ignoraba todo acerca del pastoreo; no sabía cómo preparar el biberón de leche para un ternero o la forma en que había que ayudar a una yegua para tener un potrillo” (67). Still, the “listas sentimentales” of his best friends (68) reflect his preference for the old/rural/Basque world. It is topped by the “campesinos felices” Lubis, Pancho, and Ubanbe, who are followed by Obaba-dwellers: Martín, Teresa, Adrián, Joseba. In both worlds, David has a father figure: in Iruain, his uncle, Juan Imaz, the horse breeder and Republican sympathizer; in Obaba, his

father, a musician who takes advantage of the benefits of siding with the Francoists during the Civil War. As the novel progresses, he becomes increasingly estranged from his Obaba father and eventually follows his uncle into exile in the U.S. David also has two love interests, that also follow the urban/rural divide: Teresa, the daughter of Marcelino/Berlino, and the *paysanne* (as Teresa terms her) Virginia, one of the unschooled girls who work in David's mother's sewing shop. Again, David favors the rural (Virginia) over the urban (Teresa).

The series of dialectical pairs structuring the novel also organize themselves along lines other than the one I have just described. A division between appearance and hidden reality (often the reality of dark past) gives characters, places, and objects a dual nature in another sense. As David becomes aware of Obaba's history in the Civil War, he quickly discovers that his childhood images of reality, including that of Iruain, have been naive. Monological images in the novel ultimately turn out to be false. David soon realizes that just about everyone and everything has a secret past. He recalls his mother's saying "que tenemos otros ojos al lado de estos de la cara, unos ojos nocturnos que en la mayor parte de los casos nos muestran imágenes perturbadoras" (93). David uses these second eyes, which depend on a combination of intuition and accusation, to unearth the past identity and misdeeds of the Obabans. The suspicions aroused by his second pair of eyes lead him to discover the sinister counterpart to the "lista sentimental," the list of "fusilados," innocent men executed in the Civil War. It turns out that Marcelino, whom David knows by the pejorative second nickname Berlino, has been granted the town's hotel, which had belonged to the *americano* Pedro Galarreta, as a reward for his collaboration with the

fascist side. David attempts (unsuccessfully) to discover what his father Ángel's role was in the assassination of the *fusilados*.

Characters and places on the Basque side of the divide also harbor secret, dark sides. Later in the novel, when David has become a university student, it turns out that a group of entomologists that set up camp at Iruain turn out to be in fact armed activists. David quickly sees through their professed project of photographing butterflies for a Basque playing card set to determine that they are “personas dobles . . . poseían dos lenguas, dos nombres, dos territorios” (326). At this point, what had been a space of refuge turns into a space to be fled; escaping to his mother's home in the urbanized center of Obaba becomes for David “un gran alivio” (329). After David has joined the ranks of the armed activists, the adoption of aliases – Joseba becomes Etxeberria, David Ramontxu – literalizes the notion of split identity present from the first page of the book. When, while serving as a guerilla, David notices that his personality is changing (“percibí un cambio en mi personalidad”; 416), his language use marks the change; David starts to speak in the same way as his mother. The episode makes explicit the connection I am drawing between language use and self, between multiple ways of speaking and multiple identities.

In Stoneham Ranch, David, observing that Joseba behaves completely differently depending on whom he is addressing, uses the metaphor of Russian dolls to conceptualize the notion of multiple persons and expand it beyond doubleness: “A la primera y más visible de nuestras efigies le sigue una segunda, y a la segunda una tercera, y así sucesivamente hasta llegar a la última, la más secreta” (431). The Russian doll metaphor illustrates that characters are not merely double but stratified into multiplicity.

So too, the rural/urban, Basque/Spanish dichotomy is further stratified. If Obaba replicates a larger world, with a rural/urban divide, it is also a rural counterpart to the capital San Sebastián. The rural world turns out to have a sinister side that is not merely the result of outside influence. The somewhat puritanical David discovers also that vices which at first seem urban, such as drunkenness and pornography, are present in the valley surrounding Iruain. A pornographic magazine that disgusts David and leads to his expulsion from school in San Sebastian is echoed and amplified when the narrator and the “campesinos felices” spy on an open-air sexual encounter between the characters Ubanbe and Bruna. The secret annex that shelters the *indiano* Pedro Galarreta serves as the symbolic center of the valley, reproducing its qualities of darkness, closeness and possibility of escape. Called a *gordeleku* in Basque, *escondrijo* in Spanish, it too is transformed. After sheltering innocent men in the Civil War, and David in his moments of rebellion from his father, the *escondrijo* hides violent nationalist activists and, as David laments, kidnap victims. The change in name of the place, from *escondrijo* to *zulo* (376), the common name for holes used by ETA members to hide themselves, their weapons or their victims, reflects the transformation in function of the space from a positive one to a negative one.

Ignacio Echevarría misrepresents the novel when he decries its “maniqueísmo,” which he alleges renders the Basque problem as “un conflicto de lobos y pastores.” It is quite obvious by the end of the novel that the “pastores” do not always live up to David’s ideal, that the rural world is as complex and potentially sinister as any other. When David adopts Virgilian imagery to describe the rural world, he acts not as a spokesman for Atxaga but as a character adopting a literary code. This stylization only serves to

emphasize how the soon-to-be disillusioned David at times idealizes the rural world, and how he views it from the nostalgic vantage point of emigrant remembrance. After all, the book constantly points to the existence of communicative codes, showing how they transform what they represent. The book's frequent allusions to Virgil and his career (as when David considers following the "ejemplo de Virgilio y pedir a sus amigos que quemaran el original" of his manuscript; 15) only make clear the book's self-conscious borrowing of that author's idealizing writing. The novel includes, furthermore, sympathetic figures on the Francoist side of the Civil War such as one of the *Guardia Civiles* entrusted with guarding Pedro Galarreta. Teresa, if a disagreeable character, is also rendered in a sympathetic light, given her albeit limited romantic relationship with David, and her suffering from a physical disability.

The relationship between the opposites in *The Accordionist's Son* is fluid rather than static; the author sets up dichotomies only to disprove them or switch the characteristics of their halves. Joseba uses the metaphor of an out-of-control wrecking ball to describe the Basque conflict; abuses have led to hatred, which has led to further abuses, such as terrorist death threats against David and Joseba's teacher César because of his belonging to the Socialist party. "Los que habían sido víctimas se convirtieron en verdugos" (432), he concludes. Roles/identities are not constant but a consequence of circumstance.

Even though David wishes to ally himself within an old, rural Basque identity, he is in the end a liminal character, caught between perspectives, shifting between them, or simultaneously experiencing opposite ones. The section of the book entitled "Tres confesiones" (one the novel's many intertextual echoes to Atxaga's works, in this case

his short book *Tres declaraciones*) dramatizes the book's perspectivist narration by retelling the same event in three different versions. In *The Accordionist's Son*, the double-identity of the narrator, settings, and primary characters embed the simultaneity of double perspective deep within the materials of the book's narrative structure.

Memory, like all categories of textual representation in the book, acts doubly, as the only way to preserve what is disappearing through accurate recording, and as mode of creation of meaning through perspectivist exchange. Exchange is in fact necessary for preservation, for knowledge of the past can be saved in textual form only if it is handed to others, even if communication, dependent on linguistic coding and its interpretation, inevitably causes alteration to the substance being preserved. David's autobiography provides a record of what Cortázar describes as "a world . . . coming apart under . . . the pressures of modernity . . ." (*Bernardo Atxaga* 66). Yet the past as narrated by a single narrator is always partial and subjective. David's conversation with Mary Ann on the immigrant's view of homeland and host country illustrate how an individual's circumstance can completely transform his perception of a space:

Dije que los emigrantes siempre llevan consigo una idea infantil – "Aquí la gente es mala, allá donde voy será honesta; . . ." – , y que de esa fantasía surgía una primera idea del paraíso. Pero que luego, al cabo de los años, un tanto desengañados del nuevo país, conscientes de lo difícil que resulta empezar de nuevo, se producía el movimiento contrario, . . . y entonces era el país natal el que empezaba a adquirir rasgos paradisíacos. (54-5)

Needless to say, neither perspective can be fully accurate. It is their combination, in David's narration, that creates new meaning, as in the understanding that what we hope for or recall always seems better than what we have.

The novel describes numerous other reasons to doubt the accuracy of texts on the past. First are the psychological needs of the narrators, David and Joseba, which leave unclear to what extent Joseba has altered the novel. Joseba's promise to Mary Ann that the text will not contain anything that can hurt her daughters, Liz and Sara, suggests a possible embroidering of the facts, especially as it becomes clear that David may have been ashamed of his past actions, particularly those he commits as a member of the armed nationalist group. Similarly, Joseba sees writing as a confessional exercise to understand his past actions and purge his sense of guilt (464), giving him further motivation to edit the manuscript. The "Tres confesiones" stories, which he reads to the Three Rivers book club, illustrate Joseba's need to purge his past. Joseba in these stories takes the blame for the capture of the terrorist cell, as symbolized by a scar his narrator bears on his forehead from a self-inflicted wound to cover up his cooperation with the police.

A second reason for the altering of the past is the aestheticizing of lived reality. David's manuscript apparently requires re-crafting in order to take novelistic form. Joseba concludes after reading it that "David pretendía contarlo todo, sin dejar vacíos; pero algunos hechos, que yo conocía de primera mano y me parecían importantes, quedaban sin el relieve necesario" (23). Joseba's re-writing presumably corrects this flaw, but at the cost of altering the facts in the process. David's short story, "El primer americano de Obaba" (236-78), shows directly how facts are transformed in fiction. The inserted short story stems directly from David's effort to unearth, rescue, and preserve the Obaba Civil War past. It turns out to be a more compelling, and more optimistic version of a letter by Pedro Galarreta, describing his narrow escape from the Carlist and Falangist

soldiers. David's portrayal, far more heroic than Galarreta's, illustrates the needs and effects of literary writing: "[L]a realidad es triste," David concludes "y . . . los libros, hasta los más duros, la embellecen" (472).

In David's version of the novel, "Los hechos han quedado muy apretados, como anchoas en un tarro de cristal" (23). It will take a second hand to make his story – if my pun may be excused – more palatable. The book's discussion of translation similarly stresses the need for a collaborative hand to assure that a text serves a communicative purpose. David chooses to write his book in Basque, though this means that it will be unintelligible to around him. He prints three copies – one for the library of Obaba, one for his daughters, Liz and Sara, and one for his friends of the Three Rivers Book Club. It is unclear from the novel how well David's daughters have learned Basque, but his wife Mary Ann, to her displeasure, is unable to read the book; giving a copy to his friends in Three Rivers appears to be a futile gesture. Mary Ann and Joseba can only speculate about the reason for David's choice – be it to preserve his minority language or to keep his two lives on either side of the Atlantic from mixing. In any case, one of the consequences is a sterile hermiticism. It will take translation, which in the essay "El corcho y el áncla" Atxaga calls "un cohete especial . . . capaz de atravesar el espacio sideral en unos cuantos meses" for his past to be not only preserved but re-activated by his family.

In my interview with him, Atxaga explained that he had used in the novel, as "metáfora guía" "un emblema clásico de la muerte y la resurrección" – "una mariposa que sale volando de una tumba." Pedro Galarreta, for example, escapes his captors through a long stay hidden in the *escondrijo* in Iruain. He emerges with his Hotson hat –

its brim like the wings of a butterfly. David plays a game with his daughters to teach them Basque vocabulary in which he buries words in matchboxes for them to uncover (11). The first that Joseba pulls out is *mitxirrika*, the word used in Obaba for butterfly (14). As important as the past is to David, be it his small village way of life in danger of extinction, or his father's wartime crimes, it is not enough to guard it, unaltered. Memories protected in a tomb-like enclosure will die without activation.

Three of the book's chapter titles, which include "Trozo de carbón" ("lump of coal") and "Madera quemada" ("burned wood"), illustrate the mnemonic purpose of David's writing; these allude to an "herramienta para recorder cosas" (62), consisting of a rope with objects tied to it, that an old traveling Obaba fire insurance salesman uses to recall his pitch. Not coincidentally, some of the objects are shaped like a "mariposa" (61). That David/Joseba compare writing to this device not only reinforces the book's fixation on the variety of modes of representation, but the necessity of communicating memory. The device depends on the forms of symbolic representations that, in Charles Saunders Peirce's trichotomy, supposedly depend the least on interpretation: iconism and indexicality. A lump of coal, iconically, represents the positive side of fire; a piece of burnt wood, indexically, recalls fire's danger by pointing to the effect fire has had on it. Yet, without activation by the salesman through a narration interpreting the objects, the device is useless. Suffering from senility that prevents his activation of the rope, the man, unable to recall what the different objects symbolize, can do nothing but hand it over to David.

In the end, memory, clearly enough is represented as crucial for preserving David's (and we might say, by extension, Atxaga's) world. Yet, it carries a threat: that of

isolation and entombment of the rememberer. Memory as pertains to Obaba's Civil War history carries the same threat, pushing David into melancholy, and at one point reducing his "lista sentimental" of friends down to just Lubis. Atxaga does appear to affirm a duty to remember the injustices that have been committed in Obaba. These Civil War injustices remain intact, as symbolized in Berlino's continued ownership of the hotel. In another lingering injustice, Juan Imaz, who first opens David's eyes to the past (86-93), remains marginalized and in exile. Yet, David's post-memory of war, perhaps because it remains pent inside of him, has nothing like a curative effect on him. A confession with the priest Don Hipólito, in which he is unable to exclaim "me pregunto todas las noches si no seré hijo de un asesino" takes the form of a lost opportunity for exchange (99).

David can only wonder: "si me hubiera confesado con aquel hombre, tal vez mi espíritu habría encontrado la manera de curarse" (99). In any case, the tropes of curative memory I discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of this study do not occur in *The Accordionist's Son*. As in the novels of memory I discussed earlier, David discovers the war past, primarily through his uncle's accounts, and from a series of Civil War artifacts Teresa shows him that have been stored in a room at the Alaska Hotel. These include weapons, letters from war dead (which allude to Ángel), and a notebook with the list of *fusilados*, apparently in Ángel's handwriting (151-7). But rather than being made into narration, this information only lingers in David, "incrustada como un cuerpo extraño" (99).

The role of the past and its recovery then remain ultimately ambivalent in *The Accordionist's Son*. Memories of Obaba and its modes of thought, particularly the "vieja lengua," are the primary constituent of David's identity. But in the end, Atxaga affirms the necessity of using language to forge ties with others, because a fusion of opposite

perspectives leads to a more complete vision, and because memory without communication remains trapped, often with harmful side effects to him who remembers. At the same time, communication does not transmit memory unaltered, for, as in the short story about Pedro Galarreta, narration suits its own needs and distorts what has happened.

5.3. Jaume Cabré's *Maquis* Falangist Hero

Like *The Accordionist's Son*, Jaume Cabré's *La Veus del Pamano* features collective narration and centers on a protagonist of double identity: a long-dead schoolteacher named Oriol Fontelles. Fontelles is both hailed and reviled as a Falangist martyr in the book's setting of a fictional Pyrenean mountain village named Torena (in the Pallars region), where he dies during the 1944 invasion of the Valle de Arán by pro-Republican guerillas. However, in the book's present of 2002, an amateur historian named Tina Bros discovers a journal that Fontelles has hidden before his death, in which he details his second identity – as an agent for the *maquis*. Though forced to collaborate with the town's mayor, a Falangist named Valenti Targa, Fontelles spends his final months operating a radio for the guerillas, passing information Targa confides in him, and hiding guerillas and World War II refugees in his schoolhouse. Fontelles's "doble vida" (307) is the primary feature, along with the book's combination of time periods and narrative voices, that represents a confrontation between perspectives. Memory – in the form of the novelistic text – ultimately joins these perspectives to create a truer history, even though the recovery of memory within the book's plot is an incomplete one.

Born in 1947, the book's author, winner of the 2010 Premi d'Honor de les Lletres Catalanes for his fictional and critical writing, has established himself as "uno de los

grandes nombres de la literatura catalana actual” (“Jaume Cabré gana el Premio de Honor de las Letras Catalanas”). The critic Ricardo Senabre has gone so far as to call him “uno de los cuatro o cinco narradores más sólidos” of Peninsular letters (Rev. of *Voces*). However, until recently Cabré, despite his popularity in Catalonia as an author, screenwriter, philologist, and inspiration behind a popular television mini-series based on *Les veus del Pamano*, was little known in the rest of Spain. This was so despite the great success of *Les veus del Pamano* across the rest of Europe, where it sold approximately 600,000 copies, primarily in Germany (Uríbarri). The book appears to have capitalized on Germans’ interest in historical memory and the invitation of Catalan literature as the guest of honor at the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair. Cabré’s last novel *Jo confesso*, has also sold well there. In Spain, the popular and critical success of *Jo confesso*, which *El Cultural* named the best book of 2011, has quickly altered a situation that Senabre called “inexplicable” (Rev. of *Voces*). The book’s publication, Cabré’s first with simultaneous Castilian and Catalan versions, has already been followed up by a second Castilian edition of *La voces del Pamano* in the spring of 2012, with what Cabré considers a better translation by Concha Cardeñoso.

The recent critical press reviews of *Jo confesso* and *Les veus* (see Senabre and Ayala-Dip) have praised the author for his virtuosity in prose, displayed in his weaving of voices, plot threads, and temporal periods. To date, though Cabré’s works have been commented extensively in academic and press reviews in Catalan, he remains little-studied outside Catalonia. Three of the few examples of external academic criticism on Cabré have been written by Kathleen Glenn. In a review of *Fra Junoy o l’agonia dels sons*, Glenn examines Cabré’s concern with the “use and abuse of power, how it is

exercised, and to what ends” (114), a recurring theme in works such as *La teranyina* (1984), *Les veus* (the two works studied in Glenn’s other articles), and *Senyoria* (1991). Cabré’s works are populated by cruel, unscrupulous members of the red and the black who compete with each other for influence, the power to command, money, and sex, often using one of these ends as means to attain one of the others. As Joan Josep Isern notes, in *Les veus del Pamano* Cabré reflects on how those in charge have the power to write versions of the past that advances their interests, “Aquest poder que no vacil·la gens a l’hora d’escriure la Història segons les seves conveniències; que arrabassa idees, sentiments i creences; que santifica qui li convé i expulsa a les tenebres exteriors tothom qui no acull els seus dictats.”

Glenn, in her article comparing *Les Veus* and Emili Teixidor’s *Pa negre*, in addition to providing an excellent close reading of the book, situates Cabré within the group of writers who “set out to reclaim the past” (50). Glenn correctly points out that Cabré creates what Bakhtin defined as heteroglossic narration to combat the version of history imposed under the Franco regime. Cabré, she writes, “foregrounds dissonant voices that provide alternative visions of the past. His pluralistic, dialogic versions contest the monologic discourse of official history, which he does not attack directly but instead undermines by exposing how overblown and empty Falangist and Catholic rhetoric is and how those who spout it attempt to justify ignoble and even criminal deeds” (50). I would like to make further inroads in this reading by showing how Cabré combats not only Francoist discourse, but all monologic discourses of authority, in the process proposing a new relationship between center and periphery by refracting his narration through multiple voices.

To briefly summarize the novel, *Les veus del pamano* follows lives of the families of the village of Torena from the 1920s to the early 2000s, by means of a free indirect third-person narrator that recounts vignettes pieced together non-linearly. Of the many inter-related plot lines, two take center stage. In the first, set in the most repressive Francoism of the early postwar, Oriol Fontelles is forced to collaborate with the war victors, whose most egregious abuses include the murder of an innocent adolescent named Ventureta, the son of a *maquis* guerilla. Oriol, falsely suspected of having denounced Ventureta to the authorities, watches helplessly as his pregnant wife, repulsed by his collaboration, abandons him. Fontelles subsequently begins a long letter to the child he never meets, whom he mistakenly believes to be a girl, becomes a *maquis* guerilla, and begins a love affair with the irresistibly beautiful villain of the novel, Elisenda Vilabrú, the village's landowner and *cacique*. In the present-day plot, Tina Bros, after discovering the journal, investigates Torena's past and the information missing from the text. This includes the true identity of Fontelles's child, who turns out to be the adopted son of Elisenda, Marcel Vilabrú. As Glenn points out, the novel draws several parallels between the school teachers Fontelles and Bros. Bros too suffers estrangement from her spouse, Jordi, who is having an affair, and the loss of her son Arnau, who enters the Monastery of Montserrat. Both are also victims of Elisenda Vilabrú, who orders the murder of Oriol upon discovering his guerilla activities, repenting after it is too late, and who has Bros killed in a faked car accident to prevent her discoveries from coming to light. The key plot threads narrated in between include the Vilabrú family's ever-rising fortune through shady deals and aggressive capitalism, and Elisenda's efforts to beatify

Fontelles as a martyr, which are ultimately successfully thanks to her false testimony, a series of well-placed bribes, and the enlistment of the Opus Dei on her behalf.

As we have seen, in Atxaga's novel the convergence of identities provokes violent confrontation, but at the same time brings a double perspective that offers a richer, more nuanced understanding of the world. The two narrators, David and Joseba, their voices inextricably intertwined, collaborate to produce a work of greater depth than either could produce on his own. Cabré, however, offers a less optimistic version of double identity and double authorship. In *Les veus del Pamano*, voices converge in uneven power relationships, rather than in collaboration. For the most part, as in a novel such as *Mala gente que camina*, the war victors successfully write their version of the past. Elisenda Vilabrú, who becomes one of Spain's richest and most powerful figures, intervenes repeatedly to re-write Fontelles, keeping his true identity all but erased.

On the surface, Cabré's case does not appear to lend itself as readily to my argument that the peripheral perspective leads to the more frequent (or more meaningful) use of double figures. To begin with, unlike Atxaga, although he is bilingual in Catalan and Castilian, Cabré does not consider himself to be a bilingual writer. Nor, unlike Atxaga, does he translate his own works into Spanish. Furthermore, "Catalan themes" do not appear as overtly, or to the same extent as in Atxaga, so that the definition of national identity does not receive as much focus in Cabré. The inclusion of local folk customs that give Atxaga's works an air of *costumbrismo* (the carvings or town festivals, with their courtship rituals, in *The Accordionist's Son*; the *aizkolari* contest of *Bi letter*) does not take place in Cabré.

That said, Cabré makes clear that the literary universe of *Les veus* is a Catalan one, and that domination of the periphery by the center is among the many forms of exertion of power that the author explores. Those in power, seeking a uniform Spain, lump together all those in opposition, so that peripheral nationalism is made equivalent to other forbidden ideologies. For example, one of the Republicans of Torena, discovered after years of hiding as a *topo* in a family house, is described as “asesino . . . revolucionario . . . anarquista . . . catalanista” (519). *Les veus* is set in the rural heartland of Catalonia, in a Catalan-speaking area, and incorporates region-specific realities, for example the importance of the proximity of the French border and the smuggling economy, and the prevalence of anarchist ideology among the Republican opposition. Furthermore, the ramifications of the war and Francoism on Catalan expression surfaces on occasion. For example, the street names of Torena are castilianized when the village falls under National control. The carrer del Mig temporarily becomes “la calle del Medio” before being renamed after Oriol Fontelles.

Reinforcing the point I have been making throughout this study that peripheral authors do not usually portray the war in simplistic, nationalistic terms, Cabré portrays the war in Torena as taking place between Catalans. Targa, the Falangist mayor, is from a neighboring town, speaks better Catalan than Castilian, and his abuses against the population have as much to do with a desire to seize land and money and to settle grudges dating to his first employment as a smuggler as with his fascist ideology. Elisenda Vilabrú has her ancestral roots in Torena and in one scene set in Burgos has to cut off her conversaton with Targa since “parece ser que en Burgos no se puede hablar en catalán ni por la calle ni en los lugares públicos” (194).

That said, clearly enough, the fascist band of the war is associated with Spanish centralism, or with Catalans who ally themselves with centralism. Targa, upon taking possession of Torena harangues the newly conquered population in Spanish – before switching to Catalan to make sure the population understands the most important part of his speech: “quien quiera hacer una denuncia, que venga a verme” (89). Elisenda allies herself with the Francoist system, the monarchy, and the Spanish (as well as international) capitalist elite.

The examples of *tergiversación* of history by the National-Catholic-Falangist and later capitalist elite are too numerous to list completely here. To mention a few examples, after conscripting Oriol as secretary and forcing him to witness the interrogation of the adolescent Ventureta, Valenti Targa has Oriol re-write the accurate record he at first produces. Targa’s words to Oriol – “No es así. Copia” – followed by the false, sanitized version of the interrogation that will go into the official record, literalize the notion of those with power re-writing history (130). In another similar episode, after the *topo* Mauri is discovered and executed, Targa puts out the story “que . . . había vuelto al pueblo para suicidarse. . . . Como Judas” (519).

As Glenn notes, the tombstone inscriptions by “the Serrallac family of stonemasons who represent *la veu del poble* . . . illustrate graphically that history is written by those who wield power and who distort, misrepresent, or conceal facts to suit their purposes” (52). Thus, whoever is in power in Torena determines the dead person’s epitaph, which is, as Jaume Serrallac says, “la historia comprimida de la vida de una persona” (81). Thus, Ventureta’s gravemarker does not even bear his full name (173). However, upon the arrival of democracy, Jaume Serrallac, keeping the promise made to

his father, adds the boy's full name, a dove, and the epitaph "Vilmente asesinado por el fascismo" (454). Not surprisingly, Joan Esplandiú, the boy's father and *maquis* commander, during a foray into the village, defaces the falsifying tombstones of his enemy Targa and friend Fontelles (which reads "Caído por Dios y por España;" 55), in an attack against victors' history.

Fontelles, as the book's protagonist, offers the book's main example of a life rewritten. Targa, after Elisenda informs him of Oriol's participation in the resistance, calls him into the village church and has the school house inspected. Likely envious of Oriol's affair with Elisenda, Targa shoots Fontelles just after Elisenda reverses her order to kill him. Immediately after, Elisenda and Targa disseminate the story that Fontelles has been shot during a *maquis* incursion while protecting the church tabernacle. Elisenda promotes a similar version of this story in her attempt to have Fontelles, beatified, adding that he miraculously clung to the tabernacle, which the guerillas wanted to deface, even after his death. Elisenda later acts unscrupulously to make sure that the true story of his death, and her affair, never come to light. For example, she tells the truth of her affair under secret of confession to her priest uncle, August Vilabré, so that he will be bound to silence; later she destroys documents he writes on his deathbed that might have derailed the beatification. The overlapping of Oriol's identity aptly represents the meeting of cultures: a centralizing, dominating one, which is Catalan but associated with Francoist power, and a dominated, victims' one that resists it. The "espía del maquis falangista Fontelles" (478) in the narrator's word, plays as a "Doble juego" (247). Or, as Jaume Serallac puts it, "tenía doble piel" (605).

For the most part, the confluence is an unhappy one, in which the dominator distorts history and imposes its own version on the dominated. However, Fontelles' double identity cannot be summed up entirely as that of good man overwritten by a false version. Initially, Fontelles joins the *maquis* for the same reason he collaborates with the Falange: fear for his safety. Repeatedly, Fontelles makes complaints to the effect of "Tengo tanto miedo dentro" (247), to the point that fear defines his personality. It is legitimate for the reader to wonder: is Oriol a hero or merely a pawn of more powerful forces? Is his journal, for all his admission of fear and frailty, a self-serving attempt to paint himself in a better light? Though the possibility is somewhat far-fetched, after reading the journal, the character Serrallac wonders "¿Y si se lo inventó todo? . . . Para cambiar la historia" (433). As Cabré himself has put it, Fontelles is

Sobretot . . . personatge ambigu. A mesura que el vaig anar creant, el vaig anar coneixent i em va sorprendre que fos una persona amb tantes cares diferents, fins al punt que un no sap mai quina és la veritable. En general, la gent té una faceta pública i una de privada, però en el cas de l'Oriol, aquesta dualitat queda una mica desvirtuada, perquè tothom el jutja a la seva manera, tant des del punt de vista moral i ideològic com personal. . . . És covard o és valent l'Oriol? No ho sé i tampoc crec que ell mateix en tingui la resposta. (Domínguez)

It is striking that both Elisenda Vilabrú and Tina Bros believe they are putting forth a favorable image of Fontelles when their versions are so different from each other. Both use similar language to describe their projects as well. Tina decides to investigate Oriol's past "Para salvaguardar la memoria de un perdedor" (149). Though Elisenda recognizes she is distorting Oriol's character, or perhaps promoting what she wishes to be true, her object, in her words, it to "cultivar la memoria de Oriol para que sea honrado" (329).

Elisenda's good intentions – good in her own mind – qualify the idea that one side of a divide is simply dominating another. Though to a lesser degree than in Atxaga's novel, the divide between opposites is overcome in other ways as well. Marcel Vilabrú, like Oriol, is another multiple figure: he is a girl in Oriol's writing, Joan Fontelles son of a *maquis* by birth, and Marcel Vilabrú, wealthy, womanizing, and unscrupulous son and heir to Elisenda Vilabrú in the world's eyes and in his own. Bridge figures such as the "good" clergymen like Elisenda's uncle, Mosen August, and Tina's son, Arnau break a Manichean scheme between the progressive Republicans and Catholics Spanish nationalism. The book's pervading cynicism assures that those who resist Francoism are not overly romanticized. For example, Feliu Bringué, the first democratic mayor of Torena, grandson of the Republican mayor murdered in the war, on the same day he restores the pre-war street names, listens to offers to build a ski area to rival Elisenda's. He makes his corruption explicit, saying "quiero ganar pasta gansa. Por algo soy alcalde" (503). As Glenn points out in her article, Jordi, Tina's unfaithful husband, proves that political discourse of any stripe can be hollow and hypocritical. Refusing to tolerate his son Arnau's decision to become a monk, he spews politically correct rhetoric in favor of tolerance: "¿Te has olvidado de que te hemos educado en el multiculturalismo abierto, en la transversalidad y en la libertad?" (97).

A degree of doubt in the text over the dividing lines between the two *bandos* of Torena is matched by a degree of epistemological limitations to the faculty of memory. The reliability of memory in Cabré's work lies somewhere between the possibility of neat recovery, once the remnants of imposed silence are overcome, evinced by Benjamín Prado, and the near total uncertainty of *Soldados de Salamina*. To begin with, though the

third-person narrator does provide most of the necessary information about the past, complete with dates that make the non-linear chronology easy to follow, there are a number of lacunae that remain unknowable. These are literalized by a handful of cross-outs or smudges in Fontelles's journal that make some parts illegible (212, 527). For all of Tina's discoveries, the teacher's notebooks remain "llenos de espacios en blanco, llenos de interrogantes" (248).

Furthermore, though it is true that Elisenda fights and kills to falsify the past, for many others, the past has simply lost its significance. Tina Bros initially discovers Fontelles's journal because she is taking photos for a history book on schools in the area. The schoolhouse Oriol once occupied is about to be demolished. The worker who gives Tina the notebooks containing the journal, which are hidden in a cigar box behind a chalk board, is about to toss them away before she requests them (27). The casual willingness to demolish the past symbolizes the current generation's indifference. The teachers with whom Tina creates the history book argue against including a section on the Civil War in their project, as she wishes to do, because it would entail too much work, as the following dialogue indicates:

–No tenemos ni zorra de la guerra civil –dijo Ricard Termes con cautela.
 –¿Sabes el trabajo que supone? –dijo Maite con prudencia.
 –Qué pereza, ¿no? –remató Ricard. (123)

As Serrallac points out, after reading a section of Oriol's journal: "Ha pasado demasiado tiempo. Ya no le importa a nadie" (543). Most notably, Marcel Vilabré, the addressee of the notebooks, and the person most directly affected by their content, shreds them after reading them (560), and twice expresses his indifference as to whether Oriol is actually

his father (561, 562). The papers serve only as a means for Marcel to blackmail his mother into giving him total control over the family businesses.

Clearly enough, Cabré means to criticize contemporary Catalonia and Spain's indifference to the past. Still, he leaves us with a great, unanswered question: just what is the good of memory, and what does the truth about the past matter? In the end, memory itself, the "memoria" that Tina Bros invokes as the motivation for investigating Oriol, brings together the voices of opposite sides, and does create a truer version of history. In *Mala gente que camina*, Juan Urbano wields the truth he discovers in his final triumphant encounter with Carlos Lisvano. In *The Accordionist's Son*, memory serves to protect that which is disappearing. In *Les veus*, the past is kept alive in important ways, since Tina does publish one article revealing Oriol's identity, and Serrallac (of the family that is the voice of the town, i.e. its collective memory) reads the manuscript before it is destroyed.²⁶ Yet, Tina, murdered by Elisenda, is able to do very little with the past she finds, and the townspeople of Torena are eager to forget their past miseries.

Still, the text itself offers a vindication of the past and its victims. More than once, asked by others or herself "a qu  n le importan" her discoveries, the only infallible answer Tina can provide is "A la memoria" (318, 401). But just what is "la memoria," if it is more than a self-serving re-write of history, a collection of so much irrelevant data, or a tautological justification to Tina's search? The solution is the novel itself, in which the past is not erased, but remains recovered in print.

The formal structures to which the title alludes – the collage of voices, the river's meandering across time – are crucial to the book's configuration of identity in narration.

²⁶ The book does leave some doubt as to whether Serrallac will be killed like Tina; village lore has it that the waters of the River Pamano may only be heard shortly before one dies. Tina, Oriol, and Jaume Serrallac all hear it; the first two are killed shortly afterwards.

In his essay “On Rivers and Maps: Iberian Approaches to Comparison” Enric Bou proposes the study of river, as used in literature to “define identity and borders” (14) as a reading approach “akin to issues of center and periphery, otherness and non-hierarchical assumptions” (4). Drawing on this approach, I propose that the flowing of rivers offers a metaphor for Cabré’s narrative techniques, in which truth is liberated from hierarchical power relationships and the discourses of those in power.

It has often been pointed out that Cabré masterfully weaves together voices, switching via the third-person indirect narrator from an objective recounting to the thoughts inside characters’ heads to the documents reproduced in the book (Oriol’s journal, encyclopedias, telegrams, newspaper articles, etc.). Often, without confusing the reader, Cabré will leap across decades within a single paragraph or sentence. I could give dozens or even hundreds of example of these jumps. To cite one, on page 30, the narration, without indicating explicitly the shift, jumps from Tina holding the cigar box of notebooks to Oriol’s wife Rosa reproaching her husband, “¿Qué has dicho?” (30).

One of the more interesting cases of interweaving of time takes place when the narration, in a moment of macabre humor, simultaneously recounts a project run by Tina’s school and a *maquis* ruse to misinform the authorities of their movements. In the present-day narration, the school children send a message in a bottle via the River Noguera to a school downriver; in the past-tense plot, the guerillas send the corpse of a dead comrade downstream with a false note, expecting it to be discovered by the enemy. Fragments of sentences could belong to either time period, as in the following example:

–¿Cómo la pescarán? ¡Tina! ¿Cómo la pescarán?

–Con un cazamariposas –contestó Pep Pujol, que lo sabía todo.

Lo detuvieron con un garfio para quebrar el hielo, porque el cadáver se había acercado lo suficiente a la orilla . . . (238)

On the one hand, the passage serves to indicate how a sinister past lies just below the surface, that not long before war crimes took place at the very spot in which the current generation, oblivious, goes on with its business. On the other hand, it demonstrates symbolically how time flows in the novel. Flowing ever forward into the future, time nonetheless stays the same course. Just as time repeats cyclically in the novel the same dramas and power struggles are reenacted under different circumstances by subsequent generations.

The passage further illustrates how the voices that make up the novel converge, like the waters of the river. At one point in the novel, one of Oriol's students marvels at the size of the Amazon, hundreds of times wider than the Pamano, a central organizer of space for the student, a river large enough even for fishing. The Pamano in that case serves to indicate the smallness of the physical and social geography of Torena, in which petty gripes are nursed over generations.

But in the end, Fontelles's repeated lessons about the networks of rivers and tributaries, by focusing on physical geography, serve to map space without relying on the political organization by the centralistic regime in power. Similarly, the confluence of voices in the river of narration constructs a non-hierarchical version of history, in which all voices are ultimately heard, and in which identities overlap and flow into each other. This is not to say that Cabré fails to recognize "the sheer quantity of blood, pain, and hatred generated by the confrontation" of opposites (Bou 5). The author is quite aware of the imposition of the narration of the strong upon the weak. His novel, however, opens up a space in which all voices are equally heard, from those of history's victims to history's villains, from the good-hearted schoolteacher Tina to the politically correct hypocrites

Jordi and Joan Esplandiú. The identity of Cabré's Torena emerges from all of these perspectives.

5.4. Suso de Toro's Un-nameable Horrors

Home sin nome, by Suso de Toro, the final novel I will address in this study, provides yet another example of a double protagonist and perspectivist, hybrid narration. The novel's author, Xesús Miguel (better known as Suso) de Toro, is one of the most recognized authors in Galician, both inside and outside of the region. Dolores Vilavedra has described him as one of the three writers, along with Manuel Rivas and Alfredo Conde, most often translated into Spanish, comprising the "buque insignia de la escuadra narrativa galaica" ("Para una catografía" 7). Rivas, it is safe to say, has become the most canonical of the Galician writers. His volume of short stories *Que me queres, amor?* received the Premio Nacional de Narrativa and the short story "La lengua de las mariposas," in combination with two other stories from the book, was reworked into a well-known film by the same name. His work is frequently covered in academic studies and in Spanish literature courses in the U.S. Conde, winner of the Premio Nacional de Narrativa in 1986 for *Xa vai o griffón no vento* and the Premio Nadal in 1991 for *Los otros días* (written in Castilian), has since Vilavedra's writing ceded his place at the center of the Galician literary system. In an interview I conducted with him, Conde expressed that, following a period of success and political involvement (including a stint as minister of culture for Galicia) he has been shunned by institutional critics and bureaucrats. Upon releasing his latest novel in 2010, he expressed his intention to write in Castilian in the future, saying "Deixei de escribir en galego porque deime de conta de que

levaba vinte anos facendo o parvo, de que non se me quere e de que non teño amigos” (“Entrevista”).

Toro, who was born in 1956 and resides in Santiago de Compostela, without receiving the attention of Rivas, has also been studied frequently by international academics. He is a prolific author with more than a dozen novels to his name, often in the *noir*/action genre with Galician settings. Toro is known also for his progressive political activity (for example his involvement in *Nunca Máis*, a socialist/left nationalist coalition born from the disastrous *Prestige* oil spill) and political writing (including a favorable portrait of the then president, *Madera de Zapatero* [2005]). The “critical and commercial success” of his 1993 novel *Tic-Tac*, critic Nathan Richardson has written, “linked Toro to such authors as the Basque Bernardo Atxaga and fellow Galician Manuel Rivas, who with Toro have written a figurative crack into the ethnic glass ceiling of the Spanish publishing industry.” Toro subsequently joined the ranks of the handful of peripheral writers to receive the Premio Nacional de Narrativa, for his 2002 novel *Trece badaladas* (translated as *Trece campanadas*). Formerly an active blogger himself, Toro has thematized the birth of the virtual Internet world (in *Trece badaladas*) and cultivated a Web following, holding book presentations exclusively for bloggers. In 2010, Toro, citing among other reasons the Web’s continued assault on the authority of the author figure, announced his intention to work as school teacher and retire from blogging and book writing. He has continued to publish columns in the regional edition of *El País*, however.

In perhaps the longest study of *Home sen nome* to date, Javier Gómez-Montero focuses on the construction of the city of Santiago de Compostela in the novel and two

others by Toro. The critic's description of the novel's Santiago as a "cidade submisa, pasiva, abocada ao silencio e atenazada polo medo" (15) can apply more generally to the culture of Galicia in Toro's novel, as I will note later in my analysis. Txetxu Aguado's comparison of *Home sen nome* to an Andrés Trapiello novel discusses the theory of Allain Badiou and others in more depth than the novels themselves but contextualizes both within Spain's recovery of memory and questioning of the transition, analyzing "su potencial para desmitificar la Guerra Civil y abrir el recuerdo a una noción de ética y de justicia donde lo dejado de lado encuentre el camino de su presencia" (236). Along the way, Aguado cites a Nietzschean view of memory that guides the novel: the necessity to "liberarnos del peso del pasado para no atragantarnos con él" (238). In the book's "Agradecimientos" section, Toro himself defines historical investigation as working "para que el pasado no siga enterrado de modo indigno, para que tenga un rito de despedida" (408). This paradoxical view of memory bears further analysis, for it structures *Home sen nome*. "Despedida" implies a sending away, an allowing to lapse into the past that is at odds with un-burying. The change from undignified burial to dignified burial does not completely resolve this tension.

Two shorter studies have focused on Suso's own framing of the novel as "una especie de drama religioso, una suerte de auto sacramental" (407) as a means of exploring the nature of evil and atrocity (Sánchez Villasevil; Kortazar, "Hacia el horror"). The book did not receive entirely positive views in the press. The harshest, by Pozuelo Yvancos in *ABC*, dismisses it in part precisely on account of the villain's impossibly unadulterated evil, calling the novel "un cuento para niños . . . ha de tener mentalidad de niño el lector que asiente con ella, dado que este personaje sin nombre no parece ser otra

cosa que un ogro” (“En la pira de Torquemada” 13). For Senabre, the nameless protagonist “resulta más plano de lo que sería deseable” and the ending seems unnecessary (Rev. of *Hombre*). Sánchez Villasevil also faults the “construcción” of the novel, the inclusion of “elementos algo artificiosos y poco justificados en su desenlace [que] llevan a un resultado final irregular y desequilibrado” (47).

I will not pass final judgment on these and other “flaws” that critics have pointed out, such as the repetitiousness of the dialogue. I will suggest a justification for the novel’s “unbalanced” structure, however. The book is, as Sánchez Villasevil points out, “planteado desde un cruce de géneros como híbrido entre la novela y el teatro, como un relato (sin narrador explícito) hecho de los relatos que sobre sí mismo va ensartando el protagonista” (Villasevil 47). The action, strictly speaking, never leaves the hospital room; all the images of war and the past are conjured up through dramatic dialogues and interior monologues, sometime narrative, sometimes philosophical in nature. Most of these dialogues take place between the two hospitalized men. The first is Nano, a heart-attack survivor of indeterminate age who, as the other characters all put it in different ways, “tiene poca sustancia” (111). He is a man of indeterminate identity, who lies every time he is asked about his profession (his answers include, among others, banker, Latin teacher, actor, computer software salesman, nurse). The other interlocutor is the nameless man of the title, who, we discover is a sadistic serial killer and rapist, a former Falangist gunman who participates in wartime reprisals before serving in the National military and in the *División Azul*. Evidently near death from old age, the man constantly slides into a comatose state in which he dream of his past – from his childhood, to his time in Germany as medical student, to his brief failed marriage, to his postwar attempt to find

work as a medical professor. These dream sequences provide the action – for the nameless man recalls his participation in the war – but also set the stage for a series of moral dialogues: with a priest from the old man’s childhood, another priest he meets during his one-day attempt to enter a seminary, his uncle, a Republican friend in Germany, and so on.

The hybridity of genre, between action/horror novel and the “auto sacramental” to which Toro alludes in the “Agradecimientos” section is stressed through the frequent allusions to other texts, particularly Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* and *El burlador de Sevilla*, from which the title is taken. Valle-Inclán also appears frequently in the intertextual references, and the genres adopted seem to be filtered through a layer of “esperpento.” Perhaps no image in the book is more “esperpéntica” than one of the final motifs in which the old man leaves as inheritance to Nano (who turns out to be his son) the only object he brings with him: his set of false teeth.

Toro’s novel, is characterized, I believe deliberately, precisely by a lack of a unified structure. Not fragmentary to the extent of Uribe’s *Bilbao-New York- Bilbao*, the novel is nonetheless rhizomatic in its amorphousness. It adopts forms and drops them, shifting shapes, refusing a well-wrought structure. Characters such as the hospital orderly Vanessa, deemed unnecessary by some reviewers of the novel, appear and disappear without full integration into the plot.

Most significantly, the book presents a potential structuring device of investigation of the past, like the ones we have seen in *Mala gente que camina* and *Soldados de Salamina*, but does not ultimately follow it. The writer Celia (a permutation of the protagonist of *Trece badaladas*) appears at the hospital seeking information for a

documentary on the Marías, a pair of sisters who are victims of reprisal (135). But the investigation is never carried out. At first, the old man slips into reverie, delaying the response to Celia (140 and again at 168). Later, he promises to answer, but only after unloading all that he wants to tell Celia, in the model of Scheherazade of *1001 Nights* delaying her reckoning through storytelling (189). But, though the old man's death does arrive at the end, his sharing of any information on the Marías beyond what Celia already knows, never does take place. They are mentioned for the last time on page 219 of a book of more than 400 pages. In fact, the old man, for all his confession of atrocities, never reveals hidden secrets of names of murderers, saying only "Lo sabéis todos Sus nombres están escritos en placas, en piedra, en metal. Son . . . los nombres de vuestras calles, de vuestros hospitales . . ." (320; ellipsis in orig.).

In his essay *Exiguity*, François Paré explains thus his own use of a fragmentary book structure lacking the sectional divisions and titles expected of academic criticism: "Lyotard had, after all, like Barthes, shown me the way of discontinuous thought, written in vignettes, by intuition, so that no structures of critical discourse should intrude like intolerable censorship." A similar principle operates in *Home sen nome*. With its seemingly odd combination of elements – the horror movie, Golden Age play, fairy tale, earnest memorialist novel to vindicate history's losers – it refuses any one, fully coherent form.

It is not that Suso de Toro seeks a fusion of opposite stances leading to reconciliation that critically distributes blame and praise. There is no question of which side of the war is right and which is wrong, and no question that the Republican victims deserve more memory and more dignity. Nor is the old man an ambiguous, nuanced,

character; he is, simply put, evil. Yet, the old man is ambivalent in his nature, both the type of supernatural creature dreamed up in horror stories, and an all-to-human, pathetic person. Seeing with a double vision, Toro ultimately leaves the great questions of his novel unresolved: what precisely causes and evil and allows it free reign? How may atrocity best be represented in writing? And what is the appropriate way to honor victims, when they must ultimately be sent off and forgotten?

The affirmation of double truth pervades the book. Early on, Nano, unsure if he has recovered from his heart attack, affirms:

Has muerto, Nano. Eso según se mire, porque si se mira de otra manera, no te has muerto y estás aquí en el hospital. Casi siempre hay dos maneras de ver las cosas. (15)

In another instance of simultaneous affirmation of opposite truths, after hearing the old man's memories, Nano asks him: "Eso que dice, ¿lo sabe o lo imagina?" to which he responds: "Lo sé. O lo imagino. Las dos cosas, las dos cosas" (256).

The double-nature of the old man, as the central character of the book, leaves the novel with two possible readings, one in which Francoism is condemned as causing and abetting violence and injustice, and another in which violence, linked to the supernatural, lies beyond the realm of the political or even the human. The nameless man's childhood and how he is seen by those surrounding him in his "aldea" support the second reading. The man is born with his destiny pre-written, the day that Halley's Comet passes by as, in the maid's Celina's words, "un signo de algo" (175).²⁷ Due to the character's strange temperament, Celina, who acts in place of the boy's dead mother, repeatedly makes

²⁷ The mention of Halley's Comet confirms the year of the old man's birth as 1910, the year he mentions himself. The date is noteworthy since the character is described repeatedly and vaguely as being close to a hundred years old, as when Nano concludes "Debe de tener cien años, un siglo o algo así" (35). The book was published in 2006, by which, unless it is set in the near future, it is easily deduced that he is 95 or 96. The slight exaggeration of age and its vagueness add to the man's supernatural aura.

observations to the effect that he carries “el demonio dentro” (52, 91). Hoping to cure the boy or exorcise his demons, Celina takes him to see a *meiga* (a witch/soothsayer). She declares immediately “ese niño lleva una sombra. . . . ese niño no puede morir” (90). Father Virgilio, a priest charged with teaching the adolescent boy Greek and Latin and guiding him spiritually, similarly tells him “ya me estás pareciendo el mismo demonio” (147).

The man’s lifetime of avoiding death seem to confirm the *meiga*’s prediction of immortality, and his insomnia, preoccupation with death, and inability to die seem to confirm that he is creature bred in the netherworld. In an episode that marks his life, the nameless character rides up a mountainside during a lightning storm, a la Don Juan of *El burlador de Sevilla* transgressively challenging nature and God himself. His twin brother, who does not share his dark nature rides behind him and is struck dead by lightning, but the nameless character survives. Shortly thereafter he attempts to hang himself, but the rope he uses breaks. Returning to the *aldea* as an adult after the death of his father, the man repeats the feat of walking into a lightning storm, again challenging God and nature:

Venga, carajo, venga a rodar monte abajo, ven a mí, envuélveme, trueno. . . .
 . . . Connigo no puedes, cielo. . . . Te llevaste a mi hermano y me dejas a mí.
 ¿O no puedes connigo? . . . Venga, venga, si eres hombre. Mátame si puedes. (251)

This time, the man is struck by lightning but escapes unharmed. Later, as a combatant, he repeatedly places himself in danger but survives fights in which his comrade dies, at times receiving bullet wounds that never kill him.

What I have cited in the last two paragraphs is told by the man himself in his states of delirium. The man’s lack of reliability as narrator may confirm the other reading in which this information is nothing but self-aggrandizing and self-justification. In that

case, Francoism itself may be more readily blamed for creating the monster. As an agonizing patient, the old man turns out to be a pathetic figure. Giving Nano orders while asserting his superiority (“Yo soy de otra gente, de otra raza”; 68), he cannot prevent the nurses from mocking him and playing with his limbs, and can only feign a comatose state to avoid complete humiliation. In the book’s final revelations (394-401) by the old man’s illegitimate son (Nano’s half-brother), a doctor who brings his father to Santiago to die, we discover the mundaneness of the *hombre sin nombre*’s life, at which he hints in his hallucinatory memories, but lies about when awake. The old man was never a *catedrático* in Madrid as he has said, but, shunned by the Falange and the Francoist establishment for his “fama demasiado negra,” has practiced at a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients (396). He has drunk heavily throughout his life to the point of alcoholism. As further proof of his dishonesty, as the old man mentions in his memories, he adopts his dead brother’s name during the war years before reverting to his own after the war.

In this light, the man’s “sombra” becomes mere pathology. His interest in animal death as a child – he insists on watching a pig being slaughtered (52), poisons his father’s dog (69), and expresses his desire to kill a wolf (119) – become the early manifestations of the defects that will make him a serial killer. However, within the present-day narration, the protagonist gives some proof of his extraordinary nature. At one point he correctly observes that Vanessa the orderly is pregnant (despite showing no visible signs) because of her smell. The episode seems to confirm his claim “Huelo el destino . . .” (267). Similarly, he is able to tell that Celia is a mother from her facial expression. His accurate memory of having seen the middle-aged Celia, then unknown to him, enter Santiago as a child (188) further confirms his understanding of himself as a diabolical

immortal being who can only be liberated when the sky or an angel (who turns out to be the aptly named Celia) comes to rescue him.

Both readings then turn out to be valid, and Toro insists on the man's dual nature. Awake in the hospital, the man tells himself "Soy un muerto. No, no soy un muerto" (23). The nameless man describes himself to Celia as "un hombre que es más que hombre y que ya no es hombre" (139). His taking of his brother's name literalizes the notion of person with two identities. As the nameless man tell his uncle: "Yo soy también mi hermamo. Yo soy el naranjo y el limonero. Soy la figura y la sombra" (200).

How then does Toro construct a peripheral memory through the use of a dual-natured villain? One answer, I believe lies in the historical circumstances of the Civil War in Galicia. As Vilavedra points out in her study of Galician narrative on the Civil War "En Galicia a guerra desenvolveuse de xeito un tanto peculiar, pois non houbo fronte, o que douto o conflict dunha certa ivisibilidade que a miúdo se entendeu como ausencia de violencia e sufrimeno" ("A Guerra Civil" 132). In Vilavedra's view, this reality explains why some Galician novels transfer the action to other geographies where the battles took place, and show a tendency to focus on the quiet, prolonged, postwar with an "interiorización do conflito e as súas consecuencias en forma de insalvable fractura social" (132). The best-known Galician works on the war, by Manuel Rivas (*El lápiz del carpintero*, "La lengua de las mariposas," *Los libros arden mal*) focus on war reprisals, rather than on the war itself. The teacher of "La lengua de las mariposas" is rounded up with the other representatives of the left in the *aldea* of the setting; the characters of *El lápiz del carpintero* are pulled from jail for execution without trial.

Similarly, the old man's justification – or, better said, exposition, for he does not seek sympathy or forgiveness – of his war crimes form the most important narrative thread of *Home sen nome*. The horror of his actions is highlighted by the construction of Santiago, as Gómez-Montero points out, as a “Cidade submisa.” More generally, the Galicians in this novel – at least those on the Republican side – are peaceful and passive, as well. As in the old man's view, the nation acts as a “raza mansa” (369) while he acts as the “hombre lobo” (152). The topic of war crime, of passive victims slaughtered by aggressors, is not given to the adventure scenes of *Soldados de Salamina* or the epic of battle as it appears in the defense of Madrid in Almudena Grandes's *El corazón helado*. Toro's partial turn to the supernatural suggests that the past evil he recalls is too great to figure in realistic terms, that an author must borrow from the horror genre to adequately represent it.

Could another answer lie in a re-appropriation of certain Galician stereotypes? Nathan Richardson observes that “Toro adorns the plot of *Calzados Lola* with impressions of currently fashionable regionalist/nationalist identity politics coupled with stereotypical Galician images (curiously, the simultaneous bane and boon of nationalist politics). Indeed, Toro's novel at times comes across as a kind of greeting card of contemporary Galicia” (173). In that novel, the author sets a *noir* plot in a Galician fishing village, with a protagonist who at first tries to deny his Galician roots and migrates to Madrid, but suffers from *morriña* and reconnects with his roots. Might *Home sen nome* be understood as a novel of recovery of victor's memory filtered through Galician neo-folklore? The *meiga* who accurately predicts the old man's destiny is after all a stereotyped symbol of Galicia identity, appearing on bumper stickers and souvenir-

shop pins. The lumping in of nationalism or *galleguismo* with communism/anarchism/other enemies of Francoism, which appears in *Les veus del Pamaro* is reiterated in *Hom en nome* (57, 261, 272). Is the old man a creature of rural Galician lore? He does after all lament, following the death of his mother and Celina, that nobody will cook him *filloas*. In his conversations with Celia he practices the famed relativism of Galician stereotype, negating all her statements with a “depende.”

Toro does, in my view, re-appropriate such stereotypes by way of using a home-grown aesthetic, but they seem ultimately to amount to adornments of his investigation of the victimization of civilians, the form the Civil War took in the Galician territory. Toro’s position as possessor of two cultures and speaker of two languages may explain his simultaneous representation of two ways of acting the violence he describes. Neither type of protagonist – supernatural demon or pathological human – absolves the National side of the war, of course. Toro has asserted in an interview that:

El franquismo no fue sólo una dictadura, fue un régimen asesino. Se basó en el militarismo como ideología, junto al nacionalismo español en su versión nacional-católica. Pero también tuvo un injerto de nazismo, que es lo que más me interesó y lo que explica mi personaje. El nazismo consiste en hacer ideología del odio y la deshumanización. El protagonista de mi obra no es un meapilas como Franco. Es un violento nihilista y ateo. (Hermida)

This view does not bear out unproblematically in the novel, for the old man, if a metaphor for the regime, is not of them. He is interested in Fascism’s promise in a new future constructed on destruction and bloodshed, but repeatedly swears off membership to any party or organization or allegiance with any ideology: “Ni derechas ni izquierdas, será una revolución verdadera. Brutal, como es la vida verdadera . . .” (196). Still, the Fascist side of the war hypocritically makes use of the old man’s dirty work before

swearing him off in the postwar, for his too dark past, denying him the fruits of victory because he is “Un apestado, seguí matando, no me detuve a tiempo, como ellos” (384).

But the possibility of a demonic protagonist does leave open the question of how we may learn from past and put it to rest. If the old man is beyond humanity, what sense is there and condemning his murders? What can humans learn about the exercise of pure evil not conducted by a human? In this sense, Toro’s double vision doubts the purpose of recovering the past through historical memory (doubts but does not deny, since the protagonist is human too). No effort to come to grips with a national past can account for behavior not born from national character, class division, ideology, or the other factors usually considered to be the origins of the war.

The same doubt is also cast on the novel’s one mode of physical memory, which is indeed the only evidence of the war not originating in the protagonist’s mind: the photographs of the victims. At the end of the novel, we discover that an envelope the protagonist’s son leaves in the hospital room for Celia to discover contains gruesome artifacts: images that the man without a name has taken immediately after killing his victims. Their viewing forces Celia to confront the horror she has been trying to discover yet fears knowing. The photos may remind the reader of images of the Nazi Holocaust, and their exhibition to make the genocide impossible to forget or deny.

And yet, Celia, after seeing them, immediately has Nano destroy and discard them. The old man, confronted by Celia, explains that he has taken the photographs of his victims “Para destruirlos completamente, para que su muerte fuera indigna. Para arrebatarnos la dignidad completamente. Para burlarme de ellos, de su suerte” (380). In a novel seeking to a proper burial for the dead, such artifacts cannot be kept. Yet, they are not only the

last traces of these humans, but the evidence that crimes have been committed against them. The destruction of the photos commits them to a second, permanent forgetting. In Toro's novel, it is ultimately simultaneously impossible to forget and impossible to remember the Civil War.

5.5. Conclusion

A brief look at the structures the three novels use to bring the past into the present will serve to recapitulate how they construct an unreliable memory, weakened by subjective perspectivism, as ciphered in the double narrator. In Atxaga's novel, the methods of recording and narrating memory are multiple and complex. The primary means of recording is the two narrators' mental memories, which are made text in David's journal, Joseba's memories inserted by his editing hand. As we have seen, the journal transmits a collaborative communicative memory, one that saves memory from isolation and sterility, but shows the impossibility of recovering a definitive version of the past. The narrators remember different variants of the same events and have motivations to alter them.

Atxaga, known for his play with the frame form of *Obabakoak*, also examines the act of reconstructing the past in *The Accordionist's Son* by creating examples of memory within memory. That is to say, within his journal, David remembers his own unearthing of the past or reflects on the forms of representing the past. Examples include: Juan Imaz's "carvings" – his oral anecdotes recalling his own experiences – David's discovery of the war evidence at the Hotel Alaska, the salesman's mnemonic device, Pedro Galarreta's letter, and the Hotson hat that testifies to Galarreta's escape. In one of the

more unusual examples, a dog named Oki, suddenly old and limping, transmits to David a “mensaje escrito” (336) which indicates that time has passed, leaving its ravages.

Through the message inscribed in the dog, the Hotson hat, Juan Imaz’s stories, and the memory cord, Atxaga shows how meaning is coded into a variety of formats, each of which transforms what it transmits.

The objects in the hotel Alaska – a notebook, letters, a gun, and Falangist accoutrements, summarize the functioning of memory as the narrator practices it. In that case, even the hard evidence of the past does not tell a complete, reliable story of what has happened. David becomes obsessed with the objects, in particular with a notebook with a picture of a gorilla on it, burning them into his mental memory, much as he strives to record Obaba through his writing. And yet, the objects tell the most partial of stories, saying nothing about what David’s father, Ángel, has done in the war. The Civil War and Francoist past remains oppressively present, but neither lies in waiting to be discovered nor can be reliably reconstructed. With his short story “El primer americano de Obaba,” David does succeed in preserving an embroidered version of the disappeared Obaba past. In contrast, through the Civil War artifacts, which are unable to convey their meaning, Atxaga reinforces the sterility of memory entombed.

Jaume Cabré’s novel alternates between three methods of bringing the past into the present. The first is the omniscient indirect free narrator who inhabits the minds of past residents of Torena. Through the use of recurring plot threads and parallel situations (such as the assassinations of Oriol and Tina), Cabré shows that the unjust power structures imposed in the Civil War remain intact. The second mode of memory is Oriol Fontelles’s journal, inserted into the text as Tina Bros reads and transcribes it. Finally, the

third way in which the past is recovered is through Tina's investigation, conducted primarily through eyewitness interviews, as well as some archival searches.

Like Atxaga's novel, though to a lesser extent, Cabré's incorporates perspectivism into the narration of the past. A number of scenes are narrated more than once, and the narrator's voice jumps from character to character within a single scene. Yet, unlike in Atxaga's book, the third-person narrator, can and at times does provide the definitive version of what has taken place. At the same time, the book allows that some details of Oriol's life are lost forever in the illegible portions of his journal. And, Oriol's dual nature as a hero/coward, *maquis*/falangist provide two opposite, mutually exclusive, yet partially true variations of the same figure. Oriol's double identity precludes a fully satisfactory recovery of the past. This is because power, represented by Elisenda, imposes a false version of him, but also because the narrator's double agency, and manipulation at the hands of opponents, makes him a man of many faces, none of which can be said to be the definitive one. Indifference to the past and interest in its re-writing assure that it is lost to the characters forever. Still, the mingling of the streams of voices creates a text that unifies the souls of the residents of Torena. Even if the relationship between these characters is defined as much by domination as by collaboration, the novel allows these voices to produce what comes closest to a true version of history.

In Suso de Toro's novel, the narration of the past is filtered almost entirely through the nameless protagonist in two ways. First, in his reveries, the old man recalls his life; this (sub)consciousness is recorded as a first-person narration. Secondly, the old man tells his (self-serving) version of his past to Nano and Celia, in which he ultimately confesses his crimes. The other mentioned method of uncovering the past – Celia's

investigation – proves fruitless. Here again some aspects of the past (the story of the Marías) are left unrecoverable.

A point of contrast between Toro's novel and those of the other two authors lies in one of its central objects of investigation. Whereas in Atxaga's and Cabré works, the dual-natured narrator is used to cipher double truths about the past, Toro is more concerned with trying to comprehend the nature of the evil thematized in the book. In the end, the names of assassins and details of victims' deaths prove not to be of great importance, and perhaps are better forgotten. But the old man's existence at the border of humanity and monstrosity forces a reckoning with the worst crimes imaginable, with an evil perhaps impossible to represent in a more purely realist narration.

CONCLUSION/AFTERWORD

In this project, I have sought to unpack the implications of the ways in which the transformative history of the twentieth century, and the past in general, are spoken of in Spain. Albert Reig Tapia has written, "Toda la historia española está 'marcada' por la Guerra Civil, y semejante herida seguirá haciéndose notar . . ." (12). I cite this historiographically accurate statement as point of departure to reflect on what I have found in this study: on the one hand, the difficulties of rhetorically figuring how the past is brought into the present; on the other hand, how descriptions of a remembered past often end up describing who it is that remembers.

Reig employs two metaphors invoking the continuity of the past: a history "marked" and a nation wounded. The second, I have pointed out in chapters 1 and 2,

implies a nation with a single body and a single memory. But the peripheral literatures challenge Reig's metaphor in two ways. First, their very presence suggests a more complex, pluralistic vision of the nation's shape. Secondly, these literatures suggest that national communities are, in fact, in some senses organic, as Reig's statement suggests, or at least of primordial importance to those who belong to them. However, through their increased scrutiny of the nation, these literatures also reveal the existence and functioning of discursive strategies of nation building and nation defining.

The rhetorical figure of "marking" implies leaving a physical or graphic trace. Examined closely, it points to the paradoxes of conceiving the past. Past time, though it has shaped the present, lacks solidity; it can only be reconstructed in symbolic representation. Traces of the past, like the photographs, notebooks, films, mental images, and the journals so many novels of memory include, are not the past itself, but evidence to be used for interpretation into the narrative re-imagining of it. I have sought to untangle how novels address this bind: the past continues to make its presence felt, and yet is no longer available to us. I have suggested that novels that admit to the uncertainty of the past allow the reader to participate in the reconstruction of the past, to inquire into the paradox of the simultaneous pastness/presentness of the past. In the context of the peripheral novels I have discussed in chapters 3,4, and 5 that affirm particular origins, uncertainty in the text about the past holds an added dimension; it invites the reader to see the ways in which origins define a group and yet cannot be recovered, and to see firsthand that myths of wholeness often fall apart upon critical examination.

In the course of this study, I have used current events to illustrate how the past is perceived to be present – and thus is made present through continued reaction to

conflictive memory. In the process I made an unexpected discovery: the challenge of researching contemporary culture, which is an ever-moving target. Spain has undergone rapid change in the three-year span during which this project was undertaken, forcing me to continually rethink my observations.

Perhaps most importantly, the long-awaited end of ETA appears to have arrived. In the fall of 2011, the beleaguered terrorist organization declared a permanent ceasefire and stopped its campaign of violence. Although ceasefires have been declared and broken in the past, and although the organization has refused to meet several requirements of the Spanish government – its dissolution or a renunciation of the ultimate objective of independence – government officials and the media have expressed greater optimism than in the past. It remains to be seen what the development will mean for Basque nationalism in the long term, but separatist sentiment does not appear to be fading in Euskadi. The most recent provincial and municipal elections, in which the PSOE party suffered tremendous setbacks across Spain, brought many victories, among them governance of Gipuzkoa, to the separatist coalition group Bildu, the first left nationalist party to be allowed legal status in years.

Elsewhere in Spain, Manuel Fraga, the popular senator, former president of Galicia, and former presidential candidate, seen by some as a symbol of the Spanish embracing of democracy and by others as the ultimate symbol of the impunity of the Franco regime and sign that Francoism is alive and well, has died. So too has Jorge Semprún, the writer, concentration camp survivor, Communist clandestine organizer, and symbol and memory of resistance to Franco. The current democratic regime now nearly

equals in duration the years of Franco's rule. The Civil War and dictatorship, in summary, are slipping further back into post-memory.

And yet, new controversies over historical memory have erupted. A notable example was the backlash against the Real Academia de la Historia's biographical encyclopedia, which featured entries easily interpretable as sympathetic to Francoist figures, including the *Caudillo* himself. A series of recent *El País* articles has brought to light the phenomenon that motivated Benjamín Prado's novel, discussed in chapter 2: irregularities in the adoption of regime opponents' children in early Francoism. As *El País* reported, the practice of kidnapping or coercively removing children from socially marginalized mothers continued for decades after the war, even during the democracy.

The party that has pressed for the recovery of historical memory, the PSOE, weakened by the bleak Spanish economy, ceded government control to the PP in the latest national elections. The conservative party has subsequently reduced funding for the preservation of historical memory, though it did increase the allotment for the disinterment of corpses in mass graves.

One might wonder if Spain's economic collapse will displace the debate on historical memory from the central stage it has occupied. With approximately a quarter of the population – including one half of the young – unemployed, and the dire economic prospects of the nation showing no signs of improvement, will Spaniards stop contemplating abstractions such as the restoration of justice for the dead? Or will they search for clues in the past as to what went wrong? The historian Santos Juliá, in a recent *El País* article suggested that the latter is precisely what is happening in Spain: “No hay nada como los momentos de desmoralización y crisis profunda para cultivar el género, de

gran arraigo por estas tierras, de la anomalía, la excepción y el fracaso de España. Consiste en buscar en el pasado algún desvío del camino que tendríamos que haber seguido como la causa, por traición o incompetencia, de nuestros grandes males” (“Fracaso y ficción del Estado de las autonomías”).

The reasons for the economic crisis and its effects on the cultural-political landscape of Spain go beyond the scope of this study; however, a relevant result is the increased questioning of the great internationalizing project, the European Union. The crisis of the EU has cast uncertainty on the inevitability of the advance of the “postnational,” defined in “the socio-political, as well as the intellectual context, where the concept of the ‘classic nation’ (not necessarily the concept of ‘nation’ altogether) has been superseded” (Miguélez Carballeira 277). Doubts over the benefits of Spain’s participation in the EU have reached the point where the former Spanish president Felipe González was compelled to assert, “El único recurso que le queda a la Unión Europea, no solo frente a nuestra crisis generalizada, sino para lograr incorporarnos a la nueva realidad global, es MÁS EUROPA y menos NACIONALISMO RAMPANTE” (emphasis in orig.). Yet, the European Union has brought inconsistent results to its participants, failing to prevent a division between the “central” northern states and the “peripheral” southern states. The much celebrated single currency is frequently blamed in Spain for the country’s economic maladies. The case is easily made that less Europe, or at least less centralized control, might have saved the peripheral states from the current economic disaster.

In the *Postnational Constellation*, Jürgen Habermas asserts that, as a result of globalization, governments must tackle challenges (drug trafficking, environmental

degradation, management of an internationally intertwined economy) that can only be handled at the supranational level. The failure to meet the economic challenges of a globalized economy has left the EU teetering, with many expecting at the very least the splintering of the common currency. Many particularist intellectuals have long argued that dominating states claim to speak for “ideales universales” while casting minority cultures as self-interested (Rubert de Ventós 76). Rubert de Ventós complains, to paraphrase, that Catalanists are frequently told, paternalistically, don’t you know the nation state is out of fashion? And you want one now? (80). Against Felipe González’s decrying of rampant nationalism, the current crisis would seem to justify Rubert de Ventós’s arguments in favor of increased sovereignty as a guarantor of a people’s interest on the global stage. Now Spain itself has been thrust into a “peripheral” role to the economically dominant Germany, and debates whether to accept the uncertain path “austerity” offers for economic recovery.

Helena Miguélez Carballeira underlines the “important repercussions for literary studies and literary historiography” of Habermas’s postnational paradigm (275). Specifically “in the fields of Catalan, Basque and Galician Studies, the postnational debate has brought about greater meta-critical reflection on the structures of literary historiography, together with the spark of a new revisionist thrust” (276). Perhaps the European Union’s apparent flaws will, conversely, within Spanish culture provoke a reaffirmation of the local, or a new reflection on what Miguélez defines, following Resina’s article “The Scale of the Nation in a Shrinking World,” as “postnationalism.” That term “stands for the socio-political as well as the intellectual context, where

nationalism, understood as a deleterious discourse of ‘bigoted particularism’ (70), has been dismantled and overcome” (277).

The increased reflection upon the national category has brought new methods of reading in peripheral studies. For example, the poet/critic María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar proposes “a new approach which recognizes the existence of an ‘unspeakable home’ within the shared space [that] allows for the possibility of new readings of Galician literature that could shed light on the way that certain texts, explicitly or implicitly, swerve away from dominant models of analysis” (232). Following this approach, in a fascinating study, she shows how Rosalía de Castro (as well as other canonical Galician writers), “far from perpetuating the ‘illusion of continuity’ . . . in fact locates her work in the liminal spaces between possession and dispossession, the cracks and fissures between reality and the supernatural inhabited by the ghosts who . . . constitute the crux of the national project” (231). At the same time, Rábade Villar shows that “the nation continues to be an inevitable concept in the historical construction of Galician literature, and it would certainly be inadvisable to relegate it to a secondary role in any future analysis of the Galician cultural field, or to follow the dubious assumption that it has been or should be superseded” (233).

My aim in this study has been to open new roads of inquiry in a postnational vein. I mean postnational not with “the teleological implications underlying so many critical coinages beginning with the prefix ‘post-’” (Rábade Villar 33), that is, the view that the nation has been or ought to be superseded. Rather, I mean a postnational criticism that looks beyond the nation as an essentialist given, but recognizes the continued persistence of nation, both as a primary category of identity attachment and as the vehicle of

political sovereignty. As I hope to have shown, these questions are of crucial importance to writers of the peripheral nations without state sovereignty. Few are better suited to understand the need for nation, and the need to resist many of the nation's implications, and few understand better the symbolic resources and resonances of national affirmation. By showing fissures in the memories that establish the continuity of their own culture, they envision what might be called a postnational understanding of nation – one critically aware of the multivalence of identity, the repressive potential of homogenizing nationalism, and the persistence of emotive attachment to national origin.

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